

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Maller at the New York Post Office, March 1, 1899, by Frank Tousey.

No. 290.

NEW YORK, AUGUST 12, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS AND CAPTAIN THUNDERBOLT; OR, DARING WORK IN DEATH VALLEY.

By A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.



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THE BRADYS AND CAPTAIN THUNDERBOLT

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CHAPTER I.

THE BRADYS' DOUBLE CALL.

It had been a dull time with the Bradys; for some weeks those famous detectives, whose names are now so well known from Maine to Texas, and from New York to San Francisco, had had little or nothing to do.

This was decidedly unusual. Indeed, not for several years had Old King Brady known things to so shape themselves.

The old detective had improved the time by attending to personal business in Boston.

On a certain rainy Saturday night he returned to town, and at ten minutes past eight started to enter the old house on Washington Square where for several years he had resided with Young King Brady, his partner and pupil—Harry, as he was usually called.

As Old King Brady ran up the steps a man wrapped in a rain coat with the collar turned up suddenly turned and ran followed him up to the door.

"Well, sir?" demanded the old detective, turning with latch-key in hand.

"I—aw—I was looking—for—the residence of the Brady detectives," said the stranger, in that peculiar tone so much affected by a certain class of modern business and professional men.

The very tone of his voice was irritating to Old King Brady.

Without even looking at the man's face he knew that he belonged to the class mentioned, which he heartily despised.

"This is the house," he said. "You are speaking with Old King Brady now."

"Oh, indeed!" said the stranger. "I—er—I fancied so."

I—er—I have heard of your peculiar style of dress. This old-fashioned blue coat with its long tails and brass buttons, that big white hat—I—that is to say—"

"Come, come, sir!" broke in the detective. "Never mind the peculiarities of my dress. If you have anything to say to me, say it. It is raining, and I want to go in."

"What I have to say is business, Mr. Brady. I have called to put up a proposition to you which—er—which may prove profitable to us both."

"Do you wish me to undertake a case?" asked the old detective bluntly.

"Yas—that is, if we can come to terms."

"What is your name?"

"I'd like to be Mr. Incognito until I have stated my case," replied the stranger, with a chuckling laugh.

"Very well, sir. As you will. Walk in. I will hear what you have to say."

Old King Brady opened the door and ushered the stranger into his little reception room.

Their coming was overheard, and Julius, the colored servant, was outside the door of the reception-room before the stranger was fairly seated.

Old King Brady excused himself for the moment and stepped out into the hall.

"Julius, is Mr. Harry in?" he asked.

"He has just come in a few minutes ago, sir; he is up in his room now."

"Tell him to step into the parlor. Tell him to be quick, for I have a man waiting."

In a moment Harry came running downstairs and joined his chief.

"So you are back, Governor?" he remarked, in a low tone.

"Just back. How has everything been going in my absence?"

"Fine! Nothing doing. No chance for any blunders on my part."

"You seldom blunder, Harry. Look out you don't do so to-night. I want you to get against the inside door of the reception room and listen. Make careful notes of all that passes between me and the man I have just brought in."

"Who is he?"

"Don't know. He picked me up on the steps. Says he has a case. I say he is a rascal. I judge by the tone of his voice."

"Unfortunate man!" laughed Young King Brady. "He had better go elsewhere with his case, since you have taken a dislike to him as I see you have."

"Business," said Old King Brady, and he returned to the reception room and closed the door.

The stranger, who had left his hat and rain coat in the hall, was fumbling with a cigarette.

"Do you mind if I smoke here?" he asked.

"Not at all," replied Old King Brady.

"Perhaps you will indulge in a cigarette yourself?"

"Thank you, I never use them. Proceed with your business, please."

"Before I proceed I must precede my remarks with a question," said Mr. Incognito, with a chuckling laugh.

"Very well. Put the question."

"Are you open for a case with big money in it which is—er—that is to say, which is not strictly regular?"

"That can only be decided when I hear the case."

"Then you would not absolutely refuse such a case?" asked Mr. Incognito, with a cunning leer.

There was clearly only one way to draw the man out, and that was to humor him.

Old King Brady's answer fully covered the ground.

"Depends upon the price."

"Exactly. All men have their price."

"Just so. Get ahead with your story, please."

"I have been told that you have had large experience in hunting down these Western badmen, bandits, mine robbers, hold-up men, and the like?"

"Such is the fact."

"Suppose I put you on to one of them. What would be your price to guarantee to put him out of the way? Not to send him to prison, mind you, but to put him permanently out of the way?"

"In other words, you want me to fix a price for killing a man of whom I never heard."

"Put it that way if you wish."

"I could not undertake any such business unless I knew what your motive was."

"What has my motive got to do with the matter when I am willing to pay almost any price you may name?"

"Then you don't propose to explain your motive?"

"Certainly not. I do not regard it as necessary. The man in question is the terror of the region in which he flourishes. There is a reward on his head. He is liable to be captured at any moment. You know how those cases go out in the Far West. The man probably has a big poli-

tical pull. He'll never hang. He'll get a heavy sentence to the penitentiary and will soon be pardoned out. I don't wish him pardoned out. I want him to be removed altogether. For this I am willing to pay."

"What is the man's name? Where does he hang out?"

"That I cannot tell you until we have struck a bargain."

"It seems to me that you are willing to tell me very little."

"If I tell little, then the pay is big."

"Ah, how big? Come out flat-footed, man, and make your offer."

"Fifty thousand dollars cash for this service, Mr. Brady."

"In case of success; but what if we fail?"

"Your actual expenses."

"I see; and this is all you have to say?"

"All until we strike a bargain."

"You must have a powerful motive for wanting to get rid of this man."

"I have. What is your answer?"

"I will give it to you to-morrow night if you will call here."

"Very well. I will call."

"Providing—"

"Ah, then there is a proviso!"

"Yes."

"Well, what is it?"

"That you name the man and the locality in which he lives."

"You insist on that?"

"I do, as an evidence of your good faith. Remember, sir, I do not even know your name."

"You have been very highly recommended to me, Mr. Brady, as the one man for this job."

The detective merely bowed.

"I should like to have your answer first," persisted Mr. Incognito.

"Well, then, you will never get it," answered Old King Brady, shortly. "What is more, I must ask you to bring this interview to an end, as I have much to do to-night. Don't tell me any lies now, for that will not serve your purpose. The name and the place?"

"And you will give me your answer to-morrow night?"

"I have already told you so. Come, sir! This interview must close."

"If I tell you my disclosure will be regarded as strictly confidential?"

"All my business is confidential. I don't do business any other way."

"Very well. Then the man is known as Captain Thunderbolt, and his hangout is in the Big Horn Range in Wyoming, near the town of Tensleep."

"His real name?"

"That I will tell you to-morrow night."

Evidently Mr. Incognito expected another outbreak from Old King Brady.

"Very well," said the old detective, rising. "Call to-

morrow night, Mr. Incognito. The Bradys will take care of your case."

"Thank you," said the stranger, evidently very much elated. "And when can you start in on the matter?"

"Right away."

"All right, sir. Good-evening."

"Good-evening, Mr. Incognito," replied the old detective, now all politeness, and he bowed the stranger out, turning to meet Harry at the parlor door.

Young King Brady was evidently in a state of suppressed excitement.

"Well, of all the cool propositions!" he exclaimed. "The idea of that fellow here to hire us to turn murderers! Governor, why didn't you make him tell his name?"

"Because I already knew it," replied the old detective, quietly.

"You did?"

"Yes."

"How did you find it out?"

"Read it on the inside of his hat after you went to listen at that door."

"Just like you! What was it?"

"J. Steel Grayball."

"Know him?"

"Not at all. Let's look him up in the directory."

The Bradys went into the library, where they have directories of every city of any importance.

J. Steel Grayball was found in the New York directory. His office was on lower Broadway, and his business was put down as "lawyer."

"What do you propose to do with him?" Harry asked.

"If he comes again I shall arrest him," replied Old King Brady. "Meanwhile, I shall look him up a bit. He is probably executor for some rich man's will, and this fellow he wants done up is the heir."

"Captain Thunderbolt? Did you ever hear of him?"

"Never!"

"Why didn't you arrest this man Grayball to-night?"

"You have pronounced his name as I have no doubt it ought to be spelled. The reason I let him go was because I felt sure that he was some rascally New York lawyer, and that I should have no difficulty in putting my finger on him. When I arrest him to-morrow I shall know what I am about. We have nothing else to do, and so we may as well amuse ourselves with this business of the plot against Captain Thunderbolt. Ha! What now? Is the fellow back again?"

The bell rang sharply.

In a moment Julius handed in a telegram.

"The boy is waiting for an answer, sir," he said.

The old detective tore open the despatch, and read as follows:

"Cheyenne, Wy., Aug. 10th, 19—.

"To Old King Brady, New York:

"Can you come at once. Want you to run down bad man Captain Thunderbolt. Answer."

"J. H. Perkins, Governor."

Harry stared and then burst into a loud laugh.

"Upon my word, this beats the band!" he exclaimed.

"Strange enough!" said Old King Brady, walking to his desk.

"Do we go?"

"Surely, Harry. A call from the Governor of Wyoming can hardly be refused."

"And Mr. Incognito?"

"Can wait over. Perhaps we shall serve his purpose in the ordinary run of business should we dispose of Captain Thunderbolt. He may have served ours better than we now know by calling to-night on his murderous errand."

Old King Brady wrote his despatch, and the boy departed.

By noon the next day the great detectives were once more on the wing.

Their destination was Cheyenne.

Their call there would, of course, be simply for instructions; their real destination being wherever on the map of Wyoming Captain Thunderbolt held out, and that, if Mr. Incognito had told the truth, was the town of Tensleep.

CHAPTER II.

YOUNG KING BRADY BALKS THE LYNCHERS.

"Up with him! String him right now."

"No, shoot him! Don't stop to get a rope! Shoot him down!"

"Hold, gentlemen! I am supposed to be mayor of this town. Law and order must prevail! This boy must be conducted to the jail and—"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

From the crowd which had gathered near the principal saloon of the little town of Tensleep, Wyoming, three shots came flying.

One went through the hat of Mayor Mackintosh, another flew wild, while the third narrowly missed the head of a ragged, frightened boy who, held by two rough miners, stood near the mayor.

An inch closer and it would have killed him.

"Hold! Hold! None of that!" shouted the mayor, whipping out his revolver, and making a rush right into the midst of the crowd.

It was as bold an action as was ever undertaken.

The crowd was desperate.

Half an hour before a gang of masked and mounted men had descended upon Tensleep, sweeping everything before them.

The stores had been robbed; the three saloons in the place cleaned out.

Several men had been shot dead in a feeble attempt at resistance headed by the mayor, in which not over half a dozen citizens were willing to join.

Of these valiant ones but two escaped.

One of the masked riders only had been captured, the half-starved, ragged boy in question.

The horse which he rode had been shot from under him, and in the quick dash out of town which followed the boy had been left behind to be captured by the infuriated citizens of Tensleep who were for lynching him then and there.

The mayor's bold dash was without effect.

There was no intention of hurting the worthy official, the shot which went through his hat had been purposely so aimed.

He was quickly seized and overpowered.

"It is no use, Mac! We are going to hang him!" one known to be friendly to the mayor called out. "He is one of Captain Thunderbolt's gang, and he must die. Shooting is too good for him. We shall string him up to the big tree."

The mayor yielded to force of circumstances.

He knew the temper of the Tensleepers.

While they had not been possessed of the courage to stand up against the gang of the notorious Captain Thunderbolt, they were brave enough now, and were determined to wreak their vengeance upon this unfortunate boy, who as yet had not been given the opportunity to utter a word.

A rope was provided and the noose put about the boy's neck, the other end being thrown over the limb of the tree.

"Hold on! Hold on!" cried Mayor Mackintosh. "At least we must learn the boy's name and find out what he has to say for himself."

"That's fair," cried Sam Eiler, the keeper of the saloon, and the man who had suffered most at the hands of the outlaws. "Let the boy speak."

"Come, young feller, what have you got to say for yourself?" demanded the mayor. "Speak up! Tell the truth. I can't get you a trial. It's up to you."

"Gentlemen, I am innocent," said the boy, who was trembling all over. "If you hang me it will be murder. I never saw those men till this morning. I know nothing at all about them, and that's the truth."

"He lies like thunder!" cried a voice from the crowd. "I seen him with them fellers when Captain Thunderbolt raided Punkin Butte Mine, three months ago."

"Three months ago I was in New York city," continued the boy, in a steadier voice. "Of course, if you choose to hang me, I can't help it, but if you will let me explain—"

"Go on!" cried Sam Eiler. "Give the boy a show. What's yer name?"

"Charles Carter," was the reply. "I am from New York. I came out here looking for work, and three weeks ago I found it on the Miller range. This morning Captain Thunderbolt attacked the Miller ranch and burned it. Mr. Miller was shot, and they carried me off. When they came into town here they made me put a mask on, and ride with the rest. That's all I had to do with the business. I should have been killed if I had refused to join them—that's all."

"And it hain't enough," said Sam Eiler. "Captain Thunderbolt don't treat his prisoners that way. They put

it up to you to jine the gang and you jined. Hain't that so?"

"It is not so," replied the boy. "I was never asked to join. I was just made to go along with them—that's all."

"Up with him! Up with him or we shoot!" several voices now cried.

"Hold up, gentlemen! The stage is coming!" cried the mayor, glad of anything for a diversion. "Let's wait till it comes in."

The rattle of wheels could be heard, and as the mayor spoke an old ramshackle Concord coach, drawn by two excellent horses, came dashing into the little square in which the tree stood.

There was several passengers inside, among others an elderly man with a big broad-brimmed white hat could be seen looking out of the window.

On the driver's seat was a well-dressed young fellow who held a rifle across his knees.

"Hold on nothing!" cried Sam Eiler, who held the end of the rope. "Lay hold here, boys! We'll finish this business right now."

Several caught at the rope, and the wretched youth swung to the limb.

"Save me! I am innocent!" cried the boy.

Then all in an instant the young man on top of the stage threw up his rifle and fired.

The shot cut the rope clean, and young Carter fell to the ground.

From the crowd a roar of baffled rage went up.

Several rifles were turned upon the young man. None were fired, however.

Just then the older man thrust his head out of the stage window and shouted:

"In the name of Governor Perkins I command you not to shoot, and the first man who fires dies!"

Not only his head, but a rifle came through the window of the stage, as the old man spoke.

He threw the door open, and sprang out, covering the crowd.

"No lynching allowed," he shouted. "I put it up to you, Mayor Mackintosh, if you are here. I am the man sent by the Governor to run down Captain Thunderbolt by your request."

"My name is Mackintosh," cried the mayor, stepping forward. "You must be Old King Brady."

"That's who I am," was the reply.

"Gentlemen," the old detective called out, then addressing the crowd. "I understand from a man who came up with us on the road that there has been a raid here. No doubt this boy, whom you would have hung if my partner had not interfered, is one of Captain Thunderbolt's gang. Pause and reflect how valuable he will be to us! Don't spoil the game you are trying to win by committing this rash act. Deliver the boy into my hands and take my promise that we will rid you of the pest before many days have passed!"

Calmly and deliberately Old King Brady delivered this little speech.

It had an immediate effect, and why should it not, seeing that the Bradys had been invited to Tensleep by an appeal to the governor for their services, made by the mayor at the request of the town.

Only those who know of the estimation in which the Bradys are held in the Far West on account of their very great success in putting down outlaw bands can appreciate the situation.

Practically the detectives had won out as soon as their names were made known.

"Gentlemen, leave the matter to me and the Bradys," cried Mayor Mackintosh, sending the old detective's appeal.

"Three cheers for the Bradys!" shouted Sam Eiler.

They were given with a will.

This ended the matter.

Old King Brady stepped forward, threw the noose off the neck of the trembling boy, and took him by the collar.

They got the boy into the mayor's office, where he fell trembling into a chair.

"Who was the man who told you of the raid, Mr. Brady?" asked the mayor.

"I'm sure I can't tell you," replied the old detective. "He came dashing by us on a white horse, shouting that Captain Thunderbolt was playing the mischief in Tensleep."

"This is the fourth time. It's no joke, I can tell you. All the same I don't stand for lynching none, but for fair play every time."

"Right," said Old King Brady. "We'll try and help you. The governor is in dead earnest. I hold his commission to take any means of suppressing Captain Thunderbolt which I may find necessary."

"Well, you will have my help, but I tell you straight, Mr. Brady, you don't want any men I can give you at your back. Of course, you won't quote me, but our citizens are a pusillanimous lot, as they stand just now. Not but what there are brave men among them, but those we can't get."

"What does the boy say?" replied Old King Brady. "Look up, young man! Upon my word, you don't look like a very fierce sort of bandit, just now."

"I'm not a bandit. I don't know anything about Captain Thunderbolt or his gang," murmured the boy.

"Talk to him, Mr. Brady," said the mayor. "I've got business which must be attended to. I will return soon."

The mayor arose and left the office.

"Now, then," said Old King Brady. "Boy, what's your name?"

Instead of answering the boy let his head drop forward upon his breast; then all in an instant he slid off his chair and fell to the floor in a heap.

"Scared to death, by thunder!" cried Harry springing up.

"It's only a faint," said Old King Brady. "Upon my

word, this is the queerest specimen of a bold, bad man we ever struck."

CHAPTER III.

THE BRADYS LOCATE THE GANG.

Old King Brady, who is, as is well known, possessed of medical skill, which might well be envied by many a doctor, found no difficulty in reviving the frightened boy, who had fainted from sheer exhaustion and terror.

"It's all right," said Young King Brady. "Don't bother your head any more about it, but listen to what the Governor has to say."

"Now," said Old King Brady, "tell me how you came to be with Captain Thunderbolt."

The boy told the same story he had told to the mob.

"So you are from New York?" asked the detective.

"Yes, sir. I was born and brought up there. I never lived anywhere else until I came West."

"How old are you?"

"Seventeen."

"What made you come West?"

"My father died—my mother is dead this long time—I could not get a job and I had no friends. I went on the tramp; it was better than sleeping in the streets."

"A lot better. And you kept on tramping until you came here?"

"That's it, sir. I hope you believe what I am saying."

"I certainly see no reason to do otherwise. What reason could you have for deceiving me?"

"I wouldn't do it, sir."

"I believe you in that, too. What's your name?"

"Charley Carter."

"What!" exclaimed Harry in evident astonishment, but Old King Brady checked him with a frown.

"Indeed!" he said. "Your father's name was the same as your own?"

"Yes, sir."

"And your mother was Sarah Sniffin?"

"Why yes, sir! How did you know that?"

"The detectives know a lot more than many people give us credit for. You are the grandson of Elisha Sniffin."

"I don't know what my grandfather's name was. I never heard my mother mention him."

"Your father was what, in the way of business?"

"He was just a servant, sir. He used to be a gentleman's valet. At the last he was a waiter in a hotel. Did you know him?"

"Very likely I did. I have heard of him at all events."

"But how?"

"No matter now. We will come to that later. This Captain Thunderbolt, did you get a good look at his face?"

"Oh, yes sir. They were not masked when they came to the Miller ranch."

"Tell me about your capture. You say Miller was shot. Why didn't they shoot you?"

"They were going to when all at once Captain Thunderbolt asked me my name. Then he told them not to."

"Did he ask you questions?"

"Just the same as you have, sir. I don't understand why everybody wants to know about my people. I'm nobody."

"We are all somebody. What kind of a looking man is this Captain Thunderbolt?"

"Why, he is a big man with long, black hair, and big boots."

"Never mind his boots. Did he look like any one you ever knew?"

"I can't say he did. The fact is, I was so afraid of him, Mr. Brady, that I hardly dared to look at him."

"What did he say to you besides asking these questions?"

"Not much. He told me he wanted me to come with him. He said he'd make a man of me."

"Huh! His kind of a man. Is that all he said?"

"About all."

"Think. This is very important. Did he say where he was going to take you?"

"No; but I heard one of his men say something about Death Valley and what they would do when they got back there."

"That's the talk. Anything else?"

"I don't think of anything else. Oh, yes! They kept talking about a place called Burton Mills. I understood that they were to go there to-night."

"Better and better! You're coming on famously. Did they say what they were going to Burton Mills for?"

"No; but they talked about gold they expected to get. I don't know whether it was from there or not."

"I see. Anything else?"

But Charley Carter could not seem to remember anything else, and while they were still talking, Mayor Mackintosh returned.

"Well, what do you make of the boy?" he demanded.

"He's perfectly straight," replied the old detective. "It would have been a wicked piece of business to have lynched him."

"So I said from the first. Now, Mr. Brady, what is your plan?"

"We want men, Mr. Mayor; the governor informed me that I would have no difficulty in getting them at Ten-sleep."

"It can't be done. Three at the most are all I can raise."

"I'll take the three. How about horses?"

"I can supply horses for you, five, I suppose, by levying on the people."

"The people will have to do something. I want six horses."

"You mean to take the boy along?"

"Yes."

"I wish you would. He isn't safe here."

"I get the six horses?"

"I suppose I can raise another."

"Where am I to look for more men?"

"I'm sure I can't say. You won't find anybody over anxious to tackle Captain Thunderbolt. The governor should have supplied you with men."

"Enough of that. I am bound to accept your decision and look up my own men. What do you know about this Captain Thunderbolt?"

"Very little, when you come to boil it down. He suddenly turned up in this region about a year ago. They say he came from Idaho, but some say he is a Mexican."

"He has been carrying things with a high hand ever since?"

"Off and on. Nobody knows where his hangout is. He'll suddenly appear and raid a town, or clear out a mine. Cattle he hasn't tackled except for food. I never heard of his running any number off a range."

"He ran off all Mr. Miller's cattle," put in Charley. "They stole a hundred and sixty head."

"What did they do with them?" demanded Old King Brady.

"Part of the gang went off with them, I don't know where."

"How many were there in the gang which came down on the Miller ranch?"

"I didn't count them when they first came. There were thirty-two who came down here."

"He's about right," said the mayor. "I counted thirty myself."

"Whereabout's is Burton Mills?" demanded Old King Brady abruptly.

"About sixty miles from here on the foothills of the Big Horn range," replied the mayor.

"Town?"

"No; smelting works. They handle the ore for most of the miners up around the Big Horn."

"Many men there?"

"Oh, yes; they have a large force; sixty men at least."

"Who is the superintendent?"

"Mr. Downs."

"Where is Death Valley?"

"Oh, that's away up in the mountains. I don't think there is anybody around here who can tell you just where it is. I have heard of it, and that is about all."

"Enough," said Old King Brady. "Get me your men and horses, and I'll start right in on this business."

"So soon!" exclaimed the mayor. "You have had a long ride up from Rawlins in the stage. Hadn't you better rest a day or so?"

"Rest, man!" cried Old King Brady. "Why, I never rest when there is work to do! What would Captain Thunderbolt be doing while I am resting? Robbing and murdering. No, no! I get right down to work."

"At least come out and meet more of our citizens," said the mayor. "They are anxious to see you."

And with this request, the Bradys were obliged to comply, wasting an hour or more in useless talk.

At the end of that time they rode out of town with the Carter boy and a pitiful escort of three men at their heels.

Tim Smith and Bill West were the names of two of them; they were both insignificant looking persons, and the Bradys judged that their principal occupation was loafing around the saloons at Tensleep.

The third man, Mose Medford, was altogether a different sort of character.

He claimed to be an old trapper; he stood six feet in his stockings and rode his horse as though glued to the saddle.

Better still, Mose claimed to know the whole region for a hundred miles around.

Before starting out, Old King Brady took him aside and pumped him dry.

He was satisfied that the man knew his business, and best of all, he professed to know where Death Valley was located.

Thus little by little the Bradys were getting down to their work, but the task they had assumed promised to be uphill business in more respects than one.

It was not until the detectives were well out of town, that Old King Brady told in which direction he was going.

He then informed his men that his first destination was Burton Mills, and he asked Mose how long a run he thought it was likely to be.

"We could hardly make it before dark," replied the trapper. "It's a rough road; still there hain't no chance of us missing it, for I used to work at the mills."

"Take us there," said Old King Brady. "What towns do we pass on the way?"

"Nary a town, boss. This hyar country is just what you see it away up to the Montana line."

"It is the most desolate country I ever saw, except some parts of Nevada."

"Wall, it hain't a bloomin' paradise and that's a fact. It's better after you get up into Montana, though."

"Mose," said Old King Brady, suddenly, "did you ever see Captain Thunderbolt?"

"I seen him to-day, boss."

"I mean without his mask."

"No, I never did. Mighty few have except the gang he trains with."

"How did he come to get his name?"

"Got it because he jumps on people so sudden. First thing you know he's hyar, the next thing thar—thar hain't no telling whar he may bob up next."

"Has he made any big hauls?"

"You bet he has. Thar was the Rickbaum mine. He cleaned that out completely. They say he got near a hundred thousand in gold bullion. Then thar was the Pumpkin Butte raid. He opened the bank thar and got at least fifty thousand, some say more; any number of small hauls, too. Oh, Captain Thunderbolt is a bad one, he is."

"Did you ever hear his real name mentioned?"

"No, boss. I never did. Nobody knows much about the feller before he turned up hyar."

"Would you dare to go into Death Valley with us and try to help get next to him?"

"Why, that's what I be a-doing, hain't it, boss?"

"Oh, I don't mean to fight. I mean just you and me and my partner; pretend to join the gang, you know."

Mose shook his head.

"Twouldn't work, boss. I'm too well known. Thar's sure to be someone in the gang what would know old Mose Medford."

"What if they did? Mose Medford could join the gang, I suppose."

But the old trapper did not enthuse over the project, and Old King Brady soon dropped the matter, falling back with Harry.

For the first time since they arrived at Tensleep they found opportunity to exchange a few words alone.

"Well, Governor, and what do you think of our progress?" Harry asked.

"I can't say that I feel enthusiastic about it," was the reply.

"It's a queer start about the boy."

"That's what it is; but let's drop that for the present. We know so little. It won't do to let it interfere with our work."

"I don't intend it shall; but anyhow it is lucky we got hold of someone who actually knows the mysterious badman. I think we have done first-rate. Here we know of his plans, and if we can get help from this man Downs we ought to be able to capture him."

"We shall never work it that way. You know these Western outlaws just as well as I do. They are liable to change their plans at a moment's notice. What we want to do is to work some stratagem to learn this man's secrets, and capture him red-handed with sufficient evidence to put him where he belongs."

"And that's at the end of a rope."

"That would suit my friend, Mr. J. Steel Grayball," replied Old King Brady, with a smile. "But here we are at the top of the rise, and I see there is a cross trail. Yes, Mose is turning in on it. Ride up, Harry. We should be able to get a fine view of the country here."

They urged their horses on to the top of the long hill which they had been ascending, one of the foothills of the Big Horn range.

Just before they reached it Mose suddenly halted and turned back.

"Hold on a minute, boss!" he called out. "Don't show yourself up hyar!"

"What now?" demanded Old King Brady, drawing rein.

"Dunno as it amounts to anything, but thar's a hull lot of men camped down thar in the valley. Mebbe them's the very fellers we are out gunning for now."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Old King Brady. "Then indeed we do want to go slow. Boy, dismount, and come with me."

Charley Carter dropped from the saddle, also Harry and old Mose.

"You others remain behind," said the old detective. "Mose, do you think you were seen?"

"Don't think so, boss. Still, I wouldn't like to say for sure."

Old King Brady led the way to the top of the hill, where all dropped upon the ground, and lay looking over the edge of a precipice some four or five hundred feet in height.

Below them lay a long, narrow valley, through which ran a stream lined on both sides with giant cottonwoods, in the shade of which a considerable party of men were in camp with their horses hobbled and feeding upon the grass near by.

The trail, a little further on, ran down into this valley. There was also another trail which turned off to the left, and ran along the brow of the hill.

This trail, Mose declared, led to Burton Mills, while the other extended up into the Big Horn Range.

"Now then, the question is can that be Captain Thunderbolt's band," said Old King Brady, after a careful survey of the party through his field-glass. "Here, young Carter, take this and have a look."

Charley kept the glass at his eyes several minutes before speaking.

"I think they are the men," he then said.

"You don't want to think—you want to know."

"I can't be sure."

"Look again, then. Keep on looking until you are sure."

"Yes, they are the men. I see Captain Thunderbolt now."

"Very good. Keep the glass and continue to watch them. I want to say a word to my partner. Harry—here!"

The old detective crawled to one side, Harry following him.

"I've got a scheme," said Old King Brady. "You may think it is a crazy one, but all the same I think it better be tried."

Young King Brady smiled, for he had come to know the old detective's methods so well.

"You mean for one of us to go down there with the boy and try to join the gang," he said.

"That's it, and I'm the one."

"It's all right, this scheme of yours, only you have got the cart before the horse. I'm the one."

"No, no, Harry. I wouldn't let you run the risk."

"You'll have to, then. I understand your game. You mean to be with the gang on its raid, so that by watching your opportunity you can run off with Captain Thunderbolt. The plan has worked before, but it's my job. You can do better with this mill superintendent. He may be a cranky fellow, and in that case you will know just how to work him, whereas I might fall down. Let me alone for the other end of the job, though."

"Do you think you can manage it, Harry?"

"I'm not a bit afraid to tackle the contract. Of course, I can't say how I am going to come out. It's my job, anyhow. What would Captain Thunderbolt be wanting with an old man like you?"

"There's truth in what you say, Harry," replied Old King Brady, after a little thought. "Call the boy; let's put it up to him."

Charley came crawling up, declaring he was entirely sure now.

"I am satisfied that you are right," said Old King Brady. "And now I want you to do something for me. You go with Harry down into the valley. Talk big, tell them that you escaped, and that Harry is a friend of yours whom you have brought with you. Both of you are anxious to turn outlaws, and want to join the gang. Do you think you can do this?"

Old King Brady was fully prepared for objections on the boy's part.

It went just the other way, however.

"I'll do it if you think it will help to catch that man and bring him where he belongs," Charley declared.

"That's what we are figuring on," said Old King Brady. "It seems to me your going will be a great help."

"I'd do anything to help catch Mr. Miller's murderer," replied Charley, warmly. "Mr. Miller was good to me. It was a shame the way he was killed."

"Then there's your backer, Harry," said Old King Brady.

"Oh, you consent to my going, then?" Harry exclaimed.

"Yes, since you wish it."

"Say that you think it is best."

"Well, perhaps it is."

And so it was decided.

A few minutes later Old King Brady and his three men rode up on the ridge and took the left-hand trail.

Harry and Charley Carter lay upon the ground, watching the outlaws.

If any of the band saw the old detective's party go they showed it by no sign.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERIOUS SHOT.

"Aren't you afraid they will get on to you? I should think you would be," remarked Charley Carter when Young King Brady had finished making his disguise.

"Oh, not a bit," laughed Harry. "I'm an old hand at this business. How do you think I look?"

"Why, it's wonderful. You have on just the same clothes you had before, but then you looked like a gentleman, while now—"

"While now I look like a tramp," broke in Harry, with another laugh.

"Not exactly like a tramp, but as much like one of their kind as you can look. I wouldn't have believed it was possible for a fellow to change his appearance so if I hadn't seen it done."

"That's all right. I know my business. Now are you ready to go?"

"I'm all ready. I don't know what they will say to us, but I'm willing to take my chances along with you anywhere you have a mind to go."

"Oh, you are getting stuck on me, are you?" said Harry.

"And why wouldn't I be?" replied the boy earnestly. "Only for you I'd be dead now. You know that well enough."

"All right. Stick to me and you will never go astray. Now for the horses. I'm curious to see what reception we are going to meet with down there."

They were discovered before they had ridden a dozen yards down the slope.

Harry saw one outlaw point them out; then all jumped up and had a look at them.

Next four men ran to the horses, unhobbled them, and flinging themselves into the saddle, came riding up the hill, urging their horses on at all speed.

"They don't intend to let us down there until they know who we are," said Young King Brady. "You'll have to do the first talking, Charley. Do you think you are good for it?"

"Oh, I guess I am," was the reply. "I never had any trouble in talking, unless I get scared as I was to-day."

"It was enough to scare any fellow to be hung. I think I should have been pretty well scared myself. But here they come. Now brace up. My name is Tom Baxter, mind."

"I was just going to ask you. Don't you think we had better pull in and wait?"

"Wait till we are challenged," said Harry, keeping steadily on.

The challenge came within a minute.

"Hold on! Halt thar!" shouted the foremost of the riders, who were coming single file, for the trail was narrow here.

Young King Brady and Charley immediately reined in. "Gaul bust my boots if it hain't that thar kid!" cried another of the men. "He must know us! He's got more courage than I thought he had to come on so."

"Hello!" cried Charley. "So I've caught up with you at last."

"We are hyar," growled the first speaker. "You want to give an account of yourself, though, before you come any further. Who's that you have got with you—say?"

"He's a friend of mine I met down in Tensleep," replied Charley, glibly. "He's a good fellow, too. Only for him I wouldn't have got off the way I did."

"My name is Tom Baxter!" Harry called out. "I'm looking for a chance to locate somewhere. Say, what's the matter with me joining in with you fellows? Charley thought you wouldn't mind."

The riders had come up with them by this time, and they looked Harry over pretty thoroughly before either spoke.

"My name is Dick Wright," the first speaker then said. "It isn't for me to decide. From the way you talk I reckon that kid had been telling you who we be."

"I told him, yes. You don't mind, do you?" said Charley innocently.

"Oh, I don't mind anything," replied Dick, with a half sneer. "It isn't me. It's what the boss says that goes."

"I'll put it up to Captain Thunderbolt, then," said Harry. "That is, if you will give me the chance."

"You'll have to take your chance," was the reply. "You have come too far to turn back now."

Dick Wright then went on to question Charley as to what had occurred in Tensleep after they left town.

Charley's answers were shrewd.

He told about the hanging and about Harry's wonderful shot.

So much was true, but when he added that Harry had managed to run him out of the mob to a secure hiding place, and that afterwards they had stolen a couple of horses and escaped out of town, he made the romance so fit in with the truth that the outlaws never seemed to suspect that all was not straight just as he put it.

Dick Wright's manner toward Harry now changed.

"I guess it's all right, pard," he said. "I don't believe the cap will kick any. We want good men—all we can get. But come on, and you can put it up to him."

Then they rode down into the camp.

There was but one tent, a dirty old Indian affair with figures of men and horses painted upon the sides.

Other tents folded up and securely tied could be seen with the traps belonging to the gang, which were piled up on the grass, but this was the only one which was in place.

"The boss is thar," said Dick Wright, pointing to the tent. "I'll see if he wants to talk with you now."

He approached the tent and after a little parley on the outside entered.

In a few moments he returned with orders for Young King Brady to go in alone.

Harry stepped inside the tent to find himself in the presence of a big, athletic looking man of thirty or thereabouts.

He lay stretched out upon blankets thrown on the ground.

His dark features were regular and decidedly handsome, but bore some traces of dissipation.

His manner, however, was stern and forbidding.

"Who are you? What's your name?" he demanded, without rising.

"Tom Baxter is my name," replied Harry. "As to who I am I shall have to say nobody in particular. I'm just a knockabout ready to take up with anything I can find."

"Where are you from?"

"I belong in Colorado. I'm up from Cheyenne last."

"What have you been doing for a living?"

"Well, I've punched cattle some, and I've worked in mines and quartz mills. I'm an all-around kind of feller, captain."

"So it would seem. Ever run with a gang like mine before?"

"Yes, once. That was out in Arizona. I was with Ari-
vaca Pete for four years."

"Never heard of him."

"He's dead now. Got shot by a lot of rustlers, and the
gang was all broke up after that."

"You are a good rider?"

"Fair."

"Can you bust a broncho?"

"I've busted many a one."

"Dick Wright says you are a good shot. He tell me you
saved the life of that boy I took a fancy to by cutting the
rope they were hanging him with down at Tensleep with
a bullet."

"That's true, sir."

"Don't sir me. I'm Captain Thunderbolt. You can call
me cap, same as the rest."

"I can show you how I handle a rifle any time, cap."

"All right. You can stop with us for the present, but
look here."

"Well, cap?"

"Do you know how I fix traitors?"

"No, I don't; and I shall never have a chance to learn."

"You don't want to learn. I burn them alive, and that's
not pleasant."

"You shall never burn me alive, for I shall never turn
traitor."

"Enough. Handsome is as handsome does. Now, about
that boy."

"What about him, cap?"

"That's what I am asking you. I have taken a fancy
to the kid, and I won't deny that I am glad to have him
back again."

"He must have taken a fancy to you, then, for he seemed
mighty glad to come back."

"Did he? Well, that's strange, seeing that he fought me
at the start. And yet it isn't so strange, either."

"I don't know just what you mean, cap."

"Never mind my meaning. What do you know about
the lad?"

"I don't know very much about him. He worked awhile
on a ranch down near Rawlins, where I was punching cattle.
We got kind of chummy there, that's about all."

"Did he ever tell you where he came from or anything
about himself?"

"He said he came from New York. That's about all
he ever told me."

"All right. You can go. Tell Dick that I have con-
sented to have you stop with us. We are out for a little
business to-night, and I shall blame soon find out whether
you are going to be any use to me or not. Now go."

Harry left the tent, highly satisfied with his success.

"Waal, what's the word?" asked Dick Wright, coming
up to him.

"I stay."

"Good. We are short-handed, and want more men."

"Send kid Carter to me!" roared the voice of Captain
Thunderbolt from the tent.

Charley hurried in and was gone a long time.

In the meanwhile Harry was introduced to all hands.

Dan McNutt and Whitey Brown, the two outlaws who
had accompanied Dick Wright, took the matter in charge.

Later Young King Brady was introduced into the mys-
teries of an antelope stew, and later still the great national
game of poker came in for its turn.

Long before this Charley Carter came out of the august
presence of Captain Thunderbolt, but as Young King
Brady thought it best not to pay too much attention to the
boy he found no opportunity to learn what their long in-
terview had been about.

Indeed, it was not until after dark that the chance came.

Supper was over and Harry, strolling off down the creek
under the cottonwoods smoking a black clay pipe which
he had assumed as part of his disguise, suddenly found him-
self face to face with Charley Carter, who stepped out into
view from behind a tree.

"For heaven sake, how came you here?" exclaimed Har-
ry. "Get back out of sight quick. I wouldn't have those
fellows think we were holding any private confab not for
the world."

"It's all right," said Charley. "Say, I've got a pull!"

"With the boss? I beg his humble pardon; he does not
like to be called boss. With the captain, I mean."

"Yes," said Charley, with a chuckle. "What do you
suppose?"

"Well, what?"

"He wants to adopt me as his son!"

"Phew!"

"Did you ever hear such a note?"

"It seems a strange proposition on such short acquaint-
ance. What did you say?"

"Why, I said yes, of course? Anything to forward our
plans."

"Hush, hush! Do not breathe anything of the sort. If
we are overheard we are lost."

Harry looked up into the branches of the tree, listened
and watched for a few minutes, but could discover nothing
suspicious.

"I guess it is all right," he said at length. "What ex-
cuse did he give for his proposition?"

"None at all except that he had just taken a fancy to
me."

"All right. You were sensible to fall in with him.
Anything more to say, for we must break this session right
up quick."

"I don't know as there is. We are on the move to-night."

"Yes; he told me that. Now, I'm going to walk on.
You sneak back to camp in a minute. Don't let them think
that we are together."

Harry struck a match, lit his pipe, and strolled on.

He had not gone more than twenty yards when he was
suddenly startled by the crack of a revolver.

The report was instantly followed by a cry from Charley:

"Oh, oh! I'm shot! Help!"

Harry dashed back toward the tree.

"Charley!" he called. "Charley! Speak!"

He could distinguish no one in the darkness, and no answer came to his call.

Whipping out his revolver, Young King Brady gained the tree, but saw no one save Charley Carter lying bleeding and unconscious upon the ground.

"Just as I thought," he muttered, as he kneeled beside the boy. "We were followed, our conversation, short as it was, has been overheard, and this is the result."

He fully expected a shot as he tore open Charley's shirt, and tried to discover his wound.

It was in the right breast, and the boy was bleeding profusely.

Harry clapped his handkerchief over the wound and tried to staunch the blood.

He was thus engaged when Dick Wright and Whitey Brown came dashing up and there were others still behind them.

"You snoozer! Have you shot him?" roared Wright. "Captain Thunderbolt will fix you for this!"

Before Harry could speak Wright dealt him a blow on the head which sent him sprawling, and Harry found himself covered with two revolvers as he lay upon the ground.

CHAPTER V.

SIGNALS IN THE NIGHT.

Meanwhile Old King Brady and his slender escort rode on to Burton Mills, which place they reached just at dark.

As Old King Brady rode down into the deep valley in which the smelting works was located he saw that it was quite an extensive affair.

Not only were there two large buildings covering a smelter and a twenty stamp mill, but also a large ore house, big barns, and a dozen or more substantial cottages for the accommodation of those employed in the works.

"They must do a good business here," the detective remarked to Mose Medford.

"They do that," replied the trapper. "They draw ore from all the mines in the Big Horn Range."

"Are there many mines in the range?"

"Quite a few."

"Gold or silver?"

"Both, but mostly gold."

"Has Captain Thunderbolt ever attacked the Burton Mills?"

"He tried it once about a year ago, but he got driven off. He hain't never tackled them since."

The detective rode directly up to the office, where an electric light was burning in the window.

There were a few men moving about the yard near by, and one of them came hurrying up, eyeing the riders suspiciously.

"Who do you want to see, boss?" he demanded of Old King Brady, who had just dismounted.

"Mr. Downs, the superintendent. Is he in?"

"He's in the office, yes. You can go in."

"Wait here, boys," said the old detective. "I will return soon."

He opened the door and found himself in the office without having to pass through any intervening passage.

A tall, determined-looking man sat at a desk writing, while a young clerk was putting big account books into a large safe.

"Is this Mr. Downs," asked the detective, handing the clerk his card.

Mr. Downs glanced at the card and then at the detective.

"Well, sir, what is it you wish?" he asked, coldly, his speech being flavored with the true Boston twang.

"I should like to have a few moments' talk with you, Mr. Downs," said Old King Brady. "You have heard my name before, perhaps."

"I have heard of you, yes. You can speak right out. I have no secrets from this young man."

"I have been commissioned by the governor to hunt down Captain Thunderbolt. I have already begun my work, and one of the first discoveries I have made is that Captain Thunderbolt and his gang intend making a raid on Burton Mills to-night."

"Oh, indeed," said the superintendent frigidly, "and Captain Thunderbolt has sent you to begin the job, I daresay."

It was all Old King Brady could do to control his temper.

"Mr. Downs," he said, quietly, "I see I have begun at the wrong end of this business, although I tried hard to pick out the right one. I should have shown you my credentials first. I will do so now."

There was no reply.

Old King Brady produced his commission from the governor.

It stated the business of the Bradys, and called upon all good citizens to aid them in their work.

"This seems to be straight enough," said Downs. "I—er—I apologize for my hasty remark. But what then?"

"How, what then? Are you indifferent to the warning I bring, sir? I have gone a long way out of my road to get here, and my reception is anything but civil, I must confess."

"I intend no incivility, Mr. Brady, but you may as well understand that your warning is of little consequence to me. I am fully prepared for any raid which may be made on Burton Mills by Captain Thunderbolt or any other law-breaker. We have a perfect system here, sir. We have turned off this outlaw once, and we can do it again."

"Then you don't care to hear what I have to say?"

"Not particularly—no. I don't want your help or the governor's either."

"Very good, sir. Under the circumstances I see no other

course than to retire as gracefully as possible," said the old detective with his blandest smile. "Good-evening, Mr. Downs. Pleased to have made your acquaintance, I am sure."

Old King Brady then bowed and withdrew.

The very thing at which Harry had feared to fall down had brought to Old King Brady the same fate.

And yet he was neither discouraged nor angry.

All this sort of thing was as so much study to the detective.

He had drawn his own conclusion during his brief but stormy interview with the superintendent of Burton Mills, and it would have been a very difficult matter for anyone to alter his opinion.

"But without men I can do next to nothing," he said to himself.

"Well, what's the word, cap?" inquired Mose Medford, as Old King Brady came out. "Don't we tie up here?"

"No, we don't," was the reply. "We are not wanted here. We go on our way."

"To where? There is no place nearer than twenty miles where we can get accommodations for the night."

"What are you talking about, Mose? I should think an old trapper like you might be used to the soft side of a plank by this time, or even the bare ground."

"And so I am, boss. I'm not kicking. It's only on your account that I spoke."

"Then don't you worry about me. I'm as well able to sleep outside as you or any other man. I—but what now?"

The clerk had just come out of the office as Old King Brady threw himself into the saddle.

"Mr. Brady," he said, "Mr. Downs wants me to say that as you have nowhere to go he can give you and these three men a room with blankets where you can pass the night. He will take care of your horses, too."

"Tell Mr. Downs that I am greatly obliged to him, but I must decline his offer," the detective replied.

"Just as you like, sir," said the clerk, and he then returned inside the office.

"What's that for?" asked old Mose. "Good blankets and the soft side of a plank are better than bare ground every time."

"I'm running this business, Mose," said Old King Brady, cheerfully.

"That's what you are, boss," assented the trapper, and they rode away out of the mill yard back on the Tensleep trail.

"Keep right on to the top of the hill," said Old King Brady. "We will tie up in that bit of pine woods we saw there."

Old Mose pulled up alongside the detective and began to talk.

"I ax your pardon for buttin' in, Mr. Brady," he said, "but naterally I'm interested to know what the row was between you and Boss Downs."

"No row," replied Old King Brady. "The man was cold and insolent. He declined my help, and would not

even listen to what I had to say. He as good as told me to mind my own business, so I pulled out, that's all."

Mose pondered for some minutes before speaking.

"Don't that seem mighty strange to you, Mr. Brady?" he then said.

"It does."

"What do you think of it?"

"I haven't made up my mind yet. What do you think of it, Mose? You say you worked for the man once, you ought to know something about him."

"And so I do."

"What kind of a man is he?"

"A hard man, boss. He is a regular skinner. He wants to get all there is coming to him and a little more."

"Did you ever consider him a crooked man?"

"I have had my doubts. I wouldn't want to swear to it."

"We'll watch that mill to-night," said Old King Brady. "But here we are at the pine grove. Shake us up some supper, Mose. We have our blankets; we ought to be comfortable enough."

Mose proved himself a past master in the art of cooking.

He made the most of the slender stock of provisions the old detective had brought along, and provided an excellent supper.

This over, the men sat around the fire smoking, and soon had a card game started.

"We shall have to put that fire out pretty soon, boys," said the old detective. "As the night advances we want to go into hiding, so as to be ready to catch on to Captain Thunderbolt and his gang if they come."

"Put it out now if you say so, boss," replied Mose, cheerfully.

"No, it isn't necessary. I'll take a walk along the road. By the time I return it will be soon enough to put the fire out."

Old King Brady walked down the hill toward Burton Mills, which were distant about half a mile.

He had not covered a third of that distance when he saw a man wearing a long linen duster and a white sombrero coming toward him, smoking a cigar.

"Hello! Who have we here?" thought Old King Brady. "Now I would just like to bet it is no one but that impudent rascal Downs."

As the man had already caught sight of him in the moonlight, it was too late for the old detective to turn back, so he seated himself on a rock and awaited his approach.

He soon perceived that he was right, and that it was actually the superintendent approaching him.

Mr. Downs kept his eyes fixed upon the ground, and pretended not to see the old detective until he was close alongside of the rock, when he suddenly recognized him with a start.

"Oh, it is you, is it?" he exclaimed.

"Good-evening, Mr. Downs," said Old King Brady, blandly. "Are you taking a stroll?"

"Why, yes. I didn't expect to meet you," was the reply. "I thought you had gone long ago."

"I have come this far on my road."

"And you intend to go further?"

"Oh, yes. We only halted for supper. We shall soon be on the move."

Mr. Downs was relieved. He showed it too plainly to admit of a mistake.

"You go back to Tensleep, I suppose?"

"Undoubtedly."

"I am sorry you have had your long ride for nothing, Mr. Brady."

"It has not been for nothing. I have had a chance to see a part of Wyoming I never was in before. I feel well repaid."

"I am afraid you think I was a little abrupt with you this evening, Mr. Brady."

"Well, sir, and what do you think about it yourself?"

"I think I was. I apologize."

"I accept your apology."

"Good! We may as well part friends. Of course, I have heard of you many times. Your reputation is national. I am glad to have had the opportunity to make your acquaintance. If you still care to tell me what you had to say about Captain Thunderbolt I am willing to listen."

"I don't care to go into details. In a general way I will state that Captain Thunderbolt raided the town of Tensleep this morning, and—"

"What, again?"

"As I tell you."

"Well! Much damage done?"

"A whole lot of goods stolen and several men killed."

"Come, this is serious."

"So I thought. When I accidentally learned that it was the intention of Captain Thunderbolt to attack Burton Mills to-night I considered it more serious still."

"Who told you that?"

"That is my business, Mr. Downs."

"Very good, sir. I shan't press you. May I ask in what way you proposed to help me?"

"There is no objection to the question, but I don't think I shall answer. My advice and services were declined. That is sufficient. I have no desire to butt in on your business."

"The fact is we have a weakness for managing our own affairs, Mr. Brady. My men are good fighters, and are perfectly drilled. I have no fears whatever of this attack. It will not succeed. If you care to return and accept my offer of shelter for the night you are quite welcome."

"I have already declined that offer."

"You need not fear Captain Thunderbolt, Mr. Brady. Whoever it was that told you about the attack could only have been bluffing. He will never dare to attack Burton Mills."

"Very well," said Old King Brady. "That being the case, I propose we consider the incident closed."

Mr. Downs made some further talk about things in gen-

eral, to which Old King Brady replied in the briefest manner possible.

The superintendent then bade him good-evening, and withdrew, returning down the hill.

"A rascal if ever there was one," thought Old King Brady. "Sly and tricky! Now, I wonder what his game is. Never mind. I propose to know before this night is over."

The old detective now continued his walk, making all possible haste.

His real object was to look for a secure hiding place where he could locate his men and see without being seen.

He soon discovered such a spot between two rocky ledges, which overhung the road on the left, where ran a narrow break wide enough to admit the passing of a mounted man.

Old King Brady went up through this passage, discovering behind the ledges a dish-shaped hollow in which a regiment could easily hide.

To this place he removed his noble army of three a little later.

No fire was lighted here, and every precaution was observed to prevent discovery from Burton Mills; that the smoke of the fire had been the cause of Mr. Downs coming up to the pine grove Old King Brady felt sure.

"It will be my first watch, boys," declared the detective. "Turn in, all of you. As soon as you are wanted you will be called."

Until long after midnight Old King Brady sat in a nook between the rocks, watching the Burton Mills trail.

At last, from sheer fatigue he allowed himself to drop off asleep for the instant, when he was suddenly aroused by a single rifle shot, the sound coming to his ears loud and distinctly on the still night air.

Old King Brady started to his feet and listened.

"Confound it!" he muttered as the shot was not repeated. "That shot was surely a signal. If I had not been asleep I should know from where it came, but now I don't, worse luck!"

He leaned over the ledge and looked down at the big reduction works, whose buildings could be distinctly seen in the moonlight.

It took the detective a minute or two to locate the different buildings, and he had just got the office located when he suddenly saw an upper window open and a man lean out.

He held in his hand a lighted lantern which he waved three times, and then closing the window drew back and disappeared.

"That's Downs!" thought Old King Brady. "He is answering the signal of the rifle. What mischief is the man up to? There is something besides an attack by Captain Thunderbolt in the wind for to-night."

Still maintaining his watch, Old King Brady waited an hour, and during this time he saw a lot.

Lights were flashing about the mill yard, and men could be seen moving about.

At last the detective's patience was rewarded by seeing

two big wagons of the sort in which bullion is transported come wheeling out of the mine yard, each drawn by four horses.

"They are moving gold!" thought Old King Brady. "It's a plot, and that man Downs is in it. No wonder he did not want Old King Brady about on this particular night. Who could he have been signalling to if not Captain Thunderbolt? There is to be an attack on those wagons as sure as fate."

The thought had scarcely crossed his mind when a mounted man came out ahead of the wagons and dashed up the hill.

He rode past the detective, and halted at the pine grove on ahead as near as could be judged by the sounds, for Old King Brady could not see.

"Hello! Hello in there!" he heard the shout. "Is Old King Brady there? Mr. Downs wants to see him if he is."

Of course there was no answer.

Once more the cry was repeated, and then as the man came dashing back the old detective was suddenly startled by a heavy hand being laid on his shoulder.

Old King Brady whipped out his revolver, sprang to his feet, and wheeled around.

CHAPTER VI.

AN EASY CAPTURE AND A BIG HAUL.

Probably it was nothing but Young King Brady's coolness which prevented him from getting a bullet in his head, for Dick Wright, not waiting to make good his claim that Captain Thunderbolt would fix Harry, had started in to do the job himself.

"Hold on, Dick! Don't you shoot me unless you want to shoot the wrong man!" cried Harry. "I never raised a hand against the boy."

"Then who did?" snarled Dick, delaying his shot. "Cap has given orders that particular care should be taken of the kid. This is going to get me into the worst kind of a hole."

"Don't know! Haven't the least idea!" protested Harry, and at the same moment Charley Carter opened his eyes.

"Don't hurt Tom," he gasped. "He didn't do it. Somebody fired down out of the tree."

Dick Wright sprang away and sent two shots flying into the tree.

"Come down out of that!" he roared. "Come down unless you want to die."

But nobody came down, for nobody was up there, as an after investigation fully proved.

After a great deal of confusion and talk, Charley was carried back to the camp.

They had scarcely reached it when Captain Thunderbolt came striding out of his tent.

"What was all that noise and firing about?" he demanded sternly. "Ha! That boy wounded! Whose work is this?"

"We don't know, Cap," replied Dick Wright. "We heard the first shot and cry for help, and rushed up there. We found Tom Baxter with him, but the kid says he did not fire the shot."

"Which I certainly did not," said Young King Brady boldly. "I was strolling along the bank of the stream. I had just left Charley who had been talking to me, and was going back to camp."

"And that's true," said Charley. "I don't believe I'm much hurt. Somebody fired down at me from the tree—that's all I know."

"And we've examined the tree and can't find anybody," said Dick.

"Heaven help the fellow who fired the shot if I find out who he is," said Captain Thunderbolt. "Take him into my tent, boys. As you all know, I'm a doctor by profession. I will take care of him. Let two stand guard in case I call for help. Otherwise, don't let me be disturbed."

The order was obeyed and Dick Wright began questioning Harry closely.

"Our boys are all here," he said. "It is impossible that any one of them could have fired that shot."

Young King Brady was immensely relieved.

"If none of the gang fired the shot then I am safe for the time being," he said to himself; "but whoever did fire it must have heard all we said if he was in the tree. Who could it possibly have been?"

It was a question he was unable to answer.

The next half hour was an anxious one for Harry.

At the end of that time Dick Wright informed him that the bullet had been extracted by Captain Thunderbolt.

"He's as good a doctor as you will find in all Wyoming," declared Dick. "He says the boy will pull out of this all right, and what he says goes. It beats the band whose work it could have been! Hello! Who have we here?"

A tall man, mounted on a fine horse, came suddenly dashing toward them, appearing from out of the cottonwood grove.

Dick, Whitney Brown and Dan McNutt immediately unslung their rifles and planted themselves in his path.

"Hold on, gentlemen! Don't shoot!" cried the stranger. "The password for to-day is Burton."

"Oh! It's you, is it, Mr. Downs?" said Dick, as they lowered their rifles.

"It is I," was the answer. "I want to see Captain Thunderbolt right away."

Could this be Mr. Downs, superintendent of Burton Mills?

Hardly, seeing that at this very time Old King Brady was talking with the superintendent on the road, as has already been described.

The stranger dismounted and giving his horse into Whitney Brown's charge, walked with Dick Wright to the outlaw's tent and disappeared inside.

As he passed Young King Brady he did not even glance at him, but just the same Harry got a good look at him.

It was all he could do to prevent showing his astonishment.

"Mr. Incognito!" he muttered. "The man who tried to hire the governor to put Captain Thunderbolt out of the way! But no, it can't be! Heavens! What a close resemblance, though!"

Strange thoughts came to Harry's mind during the hour which followed.

The Bradys had remained three days at Cheyenne waiting to see the governor.

"I'm not blind. I know him. It's the same man," Harry said to himself again and again, "and I'd like to bet that he is the fellow who fired that shot out of the tree and slipped away, before I came."

Before leaving New York, the Bradys had gone to the trouble to investigate Mr. Incognito, or Mr. "J. Steel Grayball" who, if Harry was right, now chose to be known under the name of Downs.

What they learned will be stated later, but we may add right here that Harry felt most anxious for Charley Carter during the time Mr. Downs No. 2 remained in Captain Thunderbolt's tent.

At last he appeared and the outlaw with him.

Captain Thunderbolt strode about among his men giving orders right and left.

The horses were at once saddled and camp struck.

Harry saw Charley Carter brought out and made as comfortable as possible upon a horse, after which he rode away accompanied by three men.

It was impossible to get a chance to speak to him, for Dick Wright had already given his orders to Harry, and he was sitting in the saddle with the rest of the outlaws at the time.

Five minutes later the whole band were on the move, with Captain Thunderbolt and Downs No. 2 in the lead.

Their way lay up out of the valley and upon reaching the ridge they took the Burton Mills trail.

There appeared to be no haste; they just jogged along easily.

After a little, Dick Wright rode up alongside Young King Brady and showed a disposition to talk.

"Strangest thing who could have fired that ar' shot at your kid friend," he remarked.

"It beats me," replied Harry. "I can't make it out at all."

"Yaas, it beat ther band," continued Dick. "Don't see how anyone could have got into the valley without the password. You see we had two guards stationed at the head of the trail just about where we struck the ridge. You didn't see 'em when we came up because they went off with the kid of the holdout whar they've took him."

"Where is it? Death Valley?" asked Harry, carelessly.

"Yaas," drawled Dick; and then he suddenly added:

"But what do you know about Death Valley? Whoever told you that our holdout was thar?"

"Oh! the kid told me."

"He did, eh? Waal, all I can say is, that trouble is going to come out of this kid business. When Cap first took him I said so. I'm just a little superstitious. Once you start in to do up a person—and Cap started in to shoot him—it don't never pays to let up on to them. Always brings bad luck. I've known it to work that way three or four times."

"Charley is a good fellow. He will never make you trouble."

"You can't make me believe it. I can't understand the business anyhow. How happens it that Cap has taken such a sudden fancy to the kid I can't see."

"It is strange. Did he ever see him at the Miller ranch?"

"Never! It isn't a bit like Cap to make free with any one. It hain't his style. By the way, I suppose you noticed that he talks a different kind of gab from us fellers—more like your own."

"He has been well educated, I guess."

"You bet. He's a full-fledged doctor. He knows all that books can't teach him. But thar! I'm a-talkin' about Cap's business and that hain't allowed."

"You were speaking of nobody being able to get into the valley without the password. We did."

"The guard wasn't at the head of the trail, then."

"So did that fellow, Downs."

"Oh, he had the password. He'd been thar before."

"Oh, I see. A friend of Captain Thunderbolt's?"

"No friend. He seems to know him. I dunno how. He just turned up a couple of days ago."

"I heard that Downs is the name of the superintendent of the Burton Mills. Is this the same man?"

"Now, don't you go trying to pry into Cap's secrets," snapped Dick, suddenly becoming suspicious. "Wait till you have been running with the gang overnight before you ask so many questions."

"Oh! I'm not curious," replied Harry. "You seemed to want to talk, so I talked, that's all. I'll shut my mouth now."

"You'd better and so had I," said Dick, and he spurred his horse ahead, joining others of the band.

But Harry had learned enough to confirm his suspicions.

"If that man is really the person I believe him to be, then he can be here for no other purpose than killing Captain Thunderbolt," he thought. "If I could only warn the fellow, it might be a big point in my favor. Well, perhaps my time will come."

It had not come up to one o'clock, however, and by that time, although Young King Brady did not know it, the gang had come very near to Burton Mills.

Suddenly a halt was ordered, and Captain Thunderbolt turning aside, went dashing up a low hill on the left of the trail.

It was now bright moonlight, and Young King Brady as he sat in his saddle with the rest, was able to follow the outlaw's movements with his eyes.

He saw him halt at the top of the hill, throw up his rifle and fire into the air.

Then he sat waiting for some minutes, after which he rode back to his band.

Harry did not then know that Burton Mills was so near, nor could he see the light waved from the office window which Old King Brady saw.

A wait of half an hour followed and then the band moved on to a point where there was a thick growth of trees on their right, in among which they filed.

Here another long halt was made.

All these tactics were very mysterious to Young King Brady. He could not understand what the outlaws were driving at, although he had settled it in his own mind long ago that Burton Mills must be their objective point.

At last the creaking of wagon wheels was heard and the deep voice of Captain Thunderbolt called out:

"Ready for business! Let every one be on the alert! No firing till I give the word."

The gang lined up between the trees facing the road.

The creaking of wheels grew louder. Harry knew now that at least two heavily loaded wagons accompanied by several horsemen were coming along the road.

"It's to be an attack on a wagon train," he said to himself. "There will be some lively fighting in a few minutes."

Soon the wagons drew so near that Harry expected every instant to see them come into view, when all at once Captain Thunderbolt called out:

"Forward!"

The gang went dashing out from cover and lined up across the road directly in front of the two wagons.

"Halt ther in the name of Captain Thunderbolt!" shouted the outlaw, adding in a lower tone:

"Fire high!"

Every rifle spoke.

But the shots were aimed above the heads of the wagon guard.

"Surrender or the next volley will sweep you fellows off the earth!" roared the outlaw and he boldly dashed on towards the wagons alone.

There were only six men with the wagons and they gave up without offering the least resistance.

One, a short, stocky fellow who rode alongside the leaders of the foremost wagons was the only man who spoke.

"I surrender because there hain't no use standing out ag'in a mob like this!" he called. "If I had any one to back me, there would be something doing about now."

"Keep your threats for the time you have the courage to put them to some use, my man!" cried Captain Thunderbolt. "What have we here? Are you the boss of this haul?"

"That's what I am," replied the man sullenly. "What you have here are two bullion wagons from Burton Mills bound for the railroad, as you most likely know."

"No matter what I know or what I don't know. How much have you got aboard?"

"I hain't examined the papers what Mr. Downs give me and I hain't been told."

"Tell me about what you think, and tell it quick."

"Something over two hundred thousand, I suppose."

"Good enough. Now then, listen to orders: You fellows will keep right on your way under guard. If you do as you are told, you will soon be relieved of your charge and no trouble will come to you, but you will find yourselves up against all kinds of trouble if you make a move to double on my men."

And this ended it.

The hot fighting which Young King Brady looked for had not come.

In a few moments the bullion train was again on its way escorted by ten outlaws, Dick Wright in the lead.

Captain Thunderbolt waited until they had disappeared around a bend in the road and then gave orders to advance.

Once more the gang started on in the direction of Burton Mills.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD KING BRADY DOUBLES ON DOWNS.

Old King Brady turned to find old Mose Medford behind him and he lowered his revolver with a sense of relief.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he said. "You have waked up, it seems. I did not hear your footsteps behind me. You gave me quite a start."

"It was that hollerin' what waked me, boss. I've learned to walk quiet. What's the row?"

"There's crooked work on foot, Mose. I can't just make out what it all means."

"I hear wagons coming."

"Yes, there are two wagons coming up from the mill. I suppose they are loaded with bullion all right."

"That's what they must be. Queer time to make a start. You're right, there is crooked work."

"Tell me, Mose," said the detective hurriedly, "are you sure there are sixty men employed in the mill at the present time?"

"Oh no! I hain't sure of nothin'. I only said there was that many when I worked thar."

"I don't believe there can be any such number from what I saw when I was down there."

"I didn't see more'n a dozen myself, boss."

"And I didn't see that many. Do you imagine that these men are in love with Ben Downs?"

"It can't be. He's a blamed sight too hard a man for that."

"Mose, I believe that he means mischief," said Old King Brady, and he told about the signalling.

Mose grew quite excited.

"Of course, that means mischief," he declared. "What be you going to do?"

"I'll tell you in a few minutes. Here are the wagons. Let's watch them go by."

The heavy wagons came creaking up the hill and passed on to the pine grove and then Old King Brady heard the challenge given and the clatter of Captain Thunderbolt's bold advance ahead of his men.

"Captured, by thunder!" he exclaimed. "It is just as I thought. Captain Thunderbolt is close to us. Downs has sold out that gold to him and ten chances to one he has also sold out the mill. Now, Mose, for my plan."

"I'm with you, boss. I'm good for anything you say."

"Wake up the men. We will make a quick dash down to the mill and capture this fellow Downs, and appeal to the men. If we can save the Burton Mills from these scoundrels there'll be a big reward coming, of which you shall all have your share."

"I'll do it," said Mose. "I'm just spilin' for a fight with some one, and I'd sooner it would be old Downs than any man I know."

"How about Bill West and Tim Smith? Can they be depended on to stand by us, think?"

"They can. They're all right, boss."

"Good! Call them! We haven't a moment to lose."

It was a bold plan which Old King Brady had undertaken.

He was counting entirely on unknown chances.

If the workmen at Burton Mills refused to listen to him, then his own life might pay the forfeit.

But Old King Brady had reasoned it all out and he was well used to this sort of thing.

In less than five minutes he had gained the road at the head of his insignificant band.

And this was while the parley with the wagons was in progress on the road.

"Forward now!" cried Old King Brady. "Leave everything to me."

The only light to be seen in or around the premises of the big reduction works was a dull glow low down towards the ground, which Mose informed the detective proceeded from the boiler room. And a bright light burning at a window over the office, which on the same authority the detective understood was the room of Superintendent Downs.

As they rode along, Old King Brady quickly matured his plans.

"If I can only trap him," was his thought.

He halted a few minutes later, and producing a strip of black cloth from his many secret pockets, tore it into four pieces, one of which he gave to each of his men.

"You want to mask, boys," he said. "Tie these cloths over the lower part of your faces."

While they were doing so, Old King Brady himself slipped on a black wig and made a quick change with his mysterious blue coat, that wonderful garment capable of so many changes.

Following on the lines of Charley Carter's description of Captain Thunderbolt, Old King Brady felt that he had now made himself up to look as much like the notorious out-

law as possible, and having masked, he threw up his rifle and fired a single shot into the air.

Immediately the window above the office was raised and Mr. Downs looked out and waved a lantern twice, immediately drawing back and closing the window again.

"As I thought," muttered Old King Brady. "He expected that signal. Well, he got it. Now, let us see what is coming next."

They dashed on and in a moment were up to the high palisade fence which enclosed the reduction works.

There was a big gate here which had been wide open at the time of the detective's previous visit, but was now closed.

"Dismount and see if that gate isn't unfastened, Mose," said Old King Brady.

Before the trapper could obey, a little wicket in the gate was opened and Mr. Downs looked out.

"Give me the password," he said in a hurried whisper, adding: "Where are the others? How is it you are here with so small a force?"

"They are right behind us, brother," said the detective in a deep voice; "as for the password, it is Burton, if I don't mistake."

Because the Burton Mills was to be the object of Captain Thunderbolt's attack that night, as he believed, Old King Brady seized upon the word and hit it right.

"Correct," whispered Downs. "The gate is unfastened. You will wait for the rest, I suppose?"

"Sure," said Old King Brady. "Is everything all right?"

"Right as the mail."

"How many men are there on the premises?"

"Only ten. I let all hands go to a dance down at Benton's Run; the game is in your hands. Did you get the wagons?"

"Yes. That is what delayed the boys. Come here, brother, I want to whisper something to you before we go on."

M. Downs advanced hesitatingly.

Evidently he was not without fear of the outlaw who had made his name a terror for miles around.

"Come, come!" said Old King Brady, still making his voice as deep as possible, "you walk as if you were stepping on eggs. I merely wish to breathe a word in your ear."

Downs got the word.

As he approached the horse the detective threw up the revolver he had held concealed and covered him.

"Make one move, utter a sound and you are a dead man!" he cried and Mose and Bill West got the word to do their part.

They sprang from the saddle and tied Downs' hands behind him.

"This is what comes of trusting a fellow like you!" snarled the baffled villain. "If I had never listened to my brother, I would have been better off."

Old King Brady, not understanding the remark, did not comment upon it.

Throwing off the mask, his features were revealed.

"By thunder!" gasped Downs. "Old King Brady, the detective!"

"Trapped!" was the reply, and the revolver was thrust closer.

"Listen, man!" cried Old King Brady. "I would save you from yourself. Captain Thunderbolt with a big force I believe to be right behind me. The mill must be saved. Your plottings are all known. Tell me the quickest way to arouse all hands, or I shall take the law in my hands and you'll see your finish right now!"

"And where do I come in?" demanded the superintendent as pale as death.

"I make no bargain with such a scoundrel as you are. Speak! Beware. Don't deceive me. I am acting under special commission from the governor of Wyoming, and am authorized to shoot Captain Thunderbolt or any of his friends."

"There's the steam whistle," gasped Downs.

"Lead the way. Is the engineer on duty to-night?"

"Yes."

"Enough! Go on, boys. Shoot him if he balks."

Mose and Bill West threw open the big gate and led the prisoner inside, Old King Brady following, while Tim Smith, leading the horses, brought up the rear.

Old King Brady rode straight to the engine house, meeting the engineer at the door.

"Wha—what's this? A raid, gaspd the man, catching sight of the superintendent's predicament.

"We are here to bust a raid, friend," said the detective. "This mean scoundrel has sold out Burton Mills to Captain Thunderbolt. The bullion wagons are already captured and if my ears don't deceive me, the gang is now coming down the hill. Blow your whistle. Rouse all hands. We must put up a fight which means business. Be sure that every one of you will earn a big reward if the mill is saved."

"And who are you?" demanded the engineer, still hesitating. "I am an honest man and I don't want to make no mistake."

"I am Old King Brady, the detective, of whom you may have heard. Will you act, man, or shall I have to force you? There isn't an instant to lose."

"There!" cried the engineer. "I always said it would come to this."

He darted inside, and in a few seconds the mill whistle was shrieking its wild alarm, but just before it started a single shot was heard on the side of the hill.

Old King Brady flung himself from the saddle, ran to the gate, and closing it, put up the heavy bars which helped to secure it.

Loud shouts and the sound of men running could be heard behind him, and Old King Brady turned to find several mill men, half dressed, coming his way.

Mose stood in front of the prisoner, guarding him with a rifle, and this seemed necessary, for several of the mill men wore threatening looks.

"Men!" shouted the old detective, his clear, ringing voice making itself heard all over the mill yard, "Listen to me! That man is a double-dyed traitor. He has betrayed you all. He has sold out the mill to Captain Thunderbolt. When he thought I was that man he opened the gate to admit me! Hark! The outlaw gang is right upon us. Stand by me like true men that you are, and help me save this mill!"

And all this time the mill whistle was shrieking out its hoarse alarm, but now even above its noise a thunderous knocking could be heard at the big gate.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ATTACK THAT FAILED.

It was fortunate for Old King Brady's plans that Captain Thunderbolt took it into his head to delay his descent on Burton Mills by a few moments when he reached the foot of the hill.

Here he halted the band and called out:

"Tom Baxter! Here!"

Harry rode forward.

Captain Thunderbolt had halted his own horse at a little distance in advance of his band.

"Downs No. 2 was close beside him, and Harry observed that the man was closely studying him in the moonlight.

"There he is, friend," said the outlaw. "Now look him over. If your suspicions are correct we may as well shoot this fellow before we start in on the attack."

"What does this man accuse me of?" cried Harry, boldly, although it must be owned he was seized with fear for his life.

"He says he believes that you are one of the Brady detectives—Young King Brady, in short!" Captain Thunderbolt blurted out.

"I'll fix him, the scoundrel," thought Harry.

He laughed harshly and said:

"Well, that's pretty good! Say, it isn't the first time I have been taken for Young King Brady. I worked in New York a couple of years, and I was picked out for the detective a dozen times, but that fellow ought to know better, for he happens to know who I really am. I never was more surprised in my life than when I saw him in camp to-night. You know me, Mr. Grayball. Own up, now!"

"Nonsense!" stammered Downs No. 2. "This is mere bluff, captain. What impudence. I—"

"Hold on! Hold on!" said Captain Thunderbolt, slowly. "One story holds good till another is told. Remember, partner, I don't happen to know you so thundering well."

Grayball cooled down.

If Harry had felt any doubt as to the man's identity before he had none now.

"Take it as you will, captain," he said. "I still stick to my charge. That fellow is Young King Brady, the detective, surest thing. Search him and proofs of his identity will no doubt be found upon him."

"I have no time to go into that now," was the reply. "If I felt sure you were right I should shoot him where he stands, but I don't. I'm going to give the boy a show."

"Thank you, cap," said Harry. "If you will let me speak I'll tell you who that man really is."

"Tell it!" cried the outlaw. "I'm waiting for you to speak."

"His name—or the name that he passes under in New York—is J. Steel Grayball; he's a lawyer, and is sole executor for the estate of Elisha Sniffen, deceased, and from what I know of him—and he knows how I learned it—he is as big a scoundrel as ever went unhung!"

Captain Thunderbolt gave a start so sudden and violent that his broncho began to jump around.

As for Grayball, he turned deathly pale, and clutched at the pommel of his saddle. For a moment Young King Brady thought he was going to faint.

"Does he speak the truth?" demanded Captain Thunderbolt on the instant, recovering his self control and reining in."

"He lies! Of course he lies! Wait till you see my brother. He'll tell you!" the lawyer cried.

"I only want to say," added Harry, with the utmost calmness, "that if you search that fellow proofs of his identity will doubtless be found upon him. Furthermore, captain, you were anxious to know who shot Charley Carter out of that tree. I tell you that I believe there sits the man."

Lawyer Grayball's face was fairly livid as Harry uttered these words.

"This is too absurd!" he cried. "I am sorry now that I brought the matter up. I—er—I—"

"Yes, of course you are," said Captain Thunderbolt, slowly. "Naturally. By the way, seeing that you come from New York you must have heard of Elisha Sniffen. Is it true that he is dead?"

"I know nothing about it—that is—er—that is to say, I never knew the man. He may be dead or alive for all I can tell."

"It is scarcely credible that you could have lived long in New York and not have heard of Elisha Sniffen and his millions," said the outlaw, coolly. "Still, such a thing is possible and as I have other business on hand just now we will drop the matter for the present, but it will be taken up again, sir. Baxter, you may get back to the ranks."

But Harry felt that he had gone too far to retreat, so he made a parting shot.

"What I say is true," he replied firmly. "I warn you to look out for that man, for your death and Charley Carter's would put him on Easy street, as he is well aware."

Captain Thunderbolt's answer was to throw up his rifle and fire into the air.

"I'll see you later, Baxter!" he cried. "Forward, all!"

And this was the order which brought the band down to the gate.

Captain Thunderbolt's surprise came when the mill whistle suddenly began its tooting.

Harry could hear him swearing even though now at some distance away, but no halt was ordered until they reached the gate.

Here they lined up, and Young King Brady found himself near Captain Thunderbolt again, wondering what was going to come out of it all.

"This is some of the Governor's work, surest thing," he said to himself. "It was just a walkover with the wagons, but it is not going to be so here."

There was no attack made for the moment.

Whitey Brown and Dan McNutt were ordered to beat on the gate with stones, and they made noise enough, but the shriek of the whistle seemed to drown all other sounds.

A hurried council of war was held, to which Young King Brady was not admitted.

Grayball kept near to the outlaw chief, and Harry watched him closely.

"If he tries any tricks on that man I'll be hanged if I don't put a shot into him!" Harry thought. "It is one thing for the Bradys to capture Captain Thunderbolt by order of the highest officer of the State, but when it comes to a mean assassin such as the fellow is, that's another part of speech."

The result of the council was soon made plain.

Two men producing short-handled axes went to work at a small tree standing near; they soon had it down and the branches lopped off.

This gave them a formidable battering ram, and the attack on the gate began.

The whistle had now ceased to blow, and although people could be heard moving about inside, there were no definite sounds to give the outlaws an idea as to what was going on behind the high fence.

Most of the men dismounted, and all hands laying hold of the tree trunk they rammed the gate with terrible force.

Harry was not with them.

Captain Thunderbolt, who remained on his horse, ordered him to keep the saddle.

As Young King Brady sat watching the work his sharp eyes suddenly caught the gleam of metal in the moonlight, about breast-high in the fence.

"Ah, ha!" he thought. "They are boring holes. I saw the auger pulled out that time. Strange Captain T. don't catch on. They can never knock that gate in. I can tell by the resistance it offers. This game is as good as lost."

He continued to watch, and again he caught the gleam of metal a little beyond the place where he had seen it before.

It was just after that the crisis came.

Suddenly half a dozen rifles were projected through as many holes in the paling, and the shot came flying.

The holes had been bored on a slant, and although those

close to the gate were safe enough, the men at the end of the tree trunk were within range.

Three fell on the first round, and two on the second. The greatest confusion followed.

With wild shouts and fierce imprecations the outlaws dropped the tree trunk and scattered.

"Flames and furies!" roared Captain Thunderbolt. "I'll balk them yet! Slide out of range, boys; we'll gather wood and burn the old fence down."

The threat was no more than uttered when the rifles spoke again and his horse was shot from under him.

Captain Thunderbolt went sprawling.

"We can't stand this!" yelled Dan McNutt. "Let's light out, boys."

He flew to the side of his fallen chief, and with two others got hold of the dead horse's tail and pulled the animal off the fallen man.

It was just at this instant that Grayball suddenly wheeling about, went dashing off up the hill.

"He thinks him dead," thought Harry, springing from the saddle, and running to help the men.

He came near picking up a shot, for the firing continued and a bullet went flying over his head.

Captain Thunderbolt was on his feet before Harry could get to him.

"After that man, young fellow!" he shouted. "Back to your saddle! Chase him—shoot him if you can't get him any other way!"

There was nothing for it but to obey, for Harry realized that his own life would probably pay the forfeit if he refused.

Swinging into the saddle he dashed off up the hill in hot pursuit of Grayball.

He knew that the attack had failed before he had gone ten yards, for he could hear Captain Thunderbolt's deep voice shouting:

"Mount, all! Forward. Let her go!"

And the outlaw band were soon clattering after him up the hill.

Harry's horse was a good one—so was the lawyer's, as it happened.

Grayball's fears probably added to the speed of the horse, for he forced the animal for all he was worth, and Harry soon perceived that he was not gaining on the man a bit—on the contrary he was barely holding his own.

"If I could only head him off," thought Young King Brady. This, however, did not seem to be possible just then, for on both sides of the trail the rocks rose high above his head. It was different when they reached the top of the ridge.

Now Young King Brady's excellent memory came into play, and his habit of close observation as well.

On ahead was a broad level stretch, but the trail, instead of running across it, took a considerable sweep, entering a low pass between the rocks of the next rise, half a mile or so beyond.

"I can do it here," thought Harry.

He turned aside and struck across the open ground, wondering as he did so why the trail did not run that way.

He soon found out.

Suddenly he caught sight of a dark shadow on the ground just ahead.

It was a deep gully with ugly rocks lining the other side.

For the instant Young King Brady thought that he had queer'd his own game.

"But this horse ought to take it," he said to himself. "It's a risk, of course, but—well, here goes!"

Digging his heels into the horse's flanks, and urging him with encouraging words, Young King Brady dashed on.

He had made no mistake.

The horse was good for the gully.

With a flying leap he passed over it, scrambled over the rocks, and gained level land beyond.

"Now, good horse! Now!" cried Harry, patting the animal on the neck.

On they flew.

In a moment or two Harry caught sight of the trail, and soon located his man.

"I've done it! I've headed him off!" he thought jubilantly, "but it may turn out as bad for me as for him."

Still he was taking chances on all that, and a few moments later he struck the trail ahead of Grayball, wheeled around, and whipping out his revolver, had his man covered before the lawyer fairly realized what it all meant.

"Dismount! Throw up your hands!" he shouted. "Lively now, unless you want this bullet to drop down your throat!"

Grayball was pale with fear as he slid from the saddle and threw up his hands.

"D—don't shoot!" he stammered. "I—I—er—I surrender; but listen! That man is bound to kill us both. Let's you and me come to terms."

"Not on your life," said Young King Brady. "I make no terms with a mean man like you! I had rather take my chances with Captain Thunderbolt any day in the week. Back up against that tree and stand there till he comes."

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER THE RAID.

Apparently Old King Brady had won out, whether Harry was destined to do so or not.

By pluck and perseverance the old detective, with only three men to back him up, had saved the big reduction works from destruction, as it afterward proved, for the intention had been to fire the place and destroy all.

As soon as the mill men were made to understand the situation they entered heartily into the detective's plan, and it took but a minute to find out how thoroughly detested Superintendent Downs was.

The boss smelter, Buck Bellows, with his side partner,

Tom Rightmeyer, were the most active in assisting the old detective, but Jake Maddox, the engineer, lent efficient aid, too.

It was he who locked Downs up in the engine-room, where there was but one door and a high window, out of which it would be next to impossible to climb.

"Want him where I can keep my eye onto him," declared Jake. "I know the old fox well. He's a sly one; give him a ghost of a show and he'll give us the slip, surest thing."

Not a word had Downs spoken since his capture, and when Old King Brady saw him after the fight he maintained the same silence still.

"I won't talk," he snarled. "You'll do as you please while you last. Never mind; my time will come."

As Old King Brady walked through the yard he observed a big iron stand-pipe which occupied a prominent position, and he inquired what it was.

"That will throw a stream in any direction," explained Buck Bellows. "Connects with the creek behind the mill. You see, boss, we are shut in on three sides; there's rocks on the right, and rocks on the left, and the creek behind. The only place they could attack us anyhow was in front. In case of fire that there pipe can throw a stream on any building in the bunch."

"Examine the connections and see if they have not been cut off," said the old detective, grimly.

Buck did so, and reported that such was the case.

"More of that man's work," said Old King Brady. "Of course, the intention was to burn the plant. Have the water turned on again, then all hands meet me in the office, and we'll hold a council of war."

It had been the old detective's idea to bore the auger holes, and it worked well, as has been seen.

Of course, he saw Harry, and he also caught sight of the lawyer Grayball, although in the dim light and excited as he was, he had not recognized the man.

Now Old King Brady ventured to open the wicket gate and look out.

Three dead men lay upon the ground. The others who had picked up the mill men's bullets had been carried away by their companions.

"I don't feel so sure that we have seen the last of them," thought Old King Brady. "It wouldn't surprise me a bit if they gave us another call."

He went into the office and turned on the electric lights which were supplied by a small dynamo connected with the power plant.

Soon the mill men began to file in.

They were all greatly excited, and all wanted to talk at once.

"Hold on, boys," said the old detective, who had now laid aside his disguise. "Don't let us waste time, for there may be more trouble ahead of us. Let me explain this whole situation, and then we will know where we are at."

In a neatly turned speech Old King Brady told all that passed between himself and Superintendent Downs. He also told what he suspected about the wagons, winding up

with an appeal to the men to help him follow up the bandits and recover the stolen bullion.

"We know that Boss Downs is a rascal," Buck Bellows said then. "We have suspected it this long time. But you want to understand, cap, that there is twice as much bullion on hand here as there was in them wagons. You have done a big thing in saving it from Captain Thunderbolt, even if we don't never get the other back."

"Just so," said Old King Brady. "But we want the other, too. Of course, we can't leave here as things stand. When do you expect the rest of the hands back from the dance?"

"They ought to be here at daylight," said Buck.

"Do you think there will be any trouble in raising a force among these men?"

"I don't think so. I'll go for one, and every man what's here now is ready to go, too."

"I see you have a telephone here. What does it connect with?"

"The line runs to Rawlins. Connects with the company's offices there."

"Very good. I'll call them up at daybreak, and state the situation. I shall want their authority to take away their men. How about arms?"

"Well, every man has his rifle, and most of us own revolvers."

"Then all is settled. Who is this man Downs? Tell me more about him?"

But beyond the fact that the superintendent had filled his present position for two years, Old King Brady learned little about the man.

While they were still talking Mose Medford came running in.

"They are back again, boss!" he shouted. "The whole gang is coming down the hill. They've got a big lot of dry pinon boughs on their horses. Looks to me as if they meant to fire the fence this time."

The mill men made a break for the door in wild excitement, but Old King Brady checked them.

"Hold on!" he cried. "I've got an idea."

"How far will that stand-pipe throw? We tried bullets on them before. Suppose we give them a dose of cold water this time?"

"It will throw clean over the fence—a stream as big around as a man's arm," said Buck Bellows. "It's a great scheme, boss. The pipe can be made to revolve or to move back and forth. We can drive 'em with the water, surest thing."

"Then we'll do it," said Old King Brady. "Who is supposed to run the pipe?"

"That's my job," declared Tom Rightmeyer.

"Get right down to it, then," said the old detective. "I'll go upstairs here in the office and watch out over the fence. Turn on the water without an instant's delay. Set the thing so that the stream will move back and forth and cover the whole road."

Old King Brady ran upstairs into the private apartments

The outlaws were coming rapidly down the hill, with Captain Thunderbolt in the lead.

As near as Old King Brady could make out Harry was not with them, nor could he see anything of the well-dressed stranger whom he had noticed before.

Looking out the side window Old King Brady saw the men clustered about the pump-house, with which the stand-pipe was connected.

In a moment the water began to fly.

The machine was one of immense power.

In less time than it takes to tell it the detective saw it descend upon the outlaws, who as luck would have it had just reached a point where they got it full force.

It checked their speed for the instant. Then they rallied and dashed through the drenching spray.

"Shorten your stream!" shouted Old King Brady out of the side window. "Drop it close outside the fence if you can!"

They could and did.

The effect can readily be imagined.

With that tremendous fall of water sweeping back and forth in front of the gate it was simply impossible for the outlaw band to get in their work.

They stood it for a minute or two, making feeble efforts to dodge the falling water, and then came a general stampede.

With a wild yell of defiance the band dashed back up the hill, the water following them as far as it was able to reach, thanks to Old King Brady's rapid orders.

Soon the last of the band had disappeared around the bend of the trail.

"And that is the last we shall see of the scoundrels," declared Old King Brady, joining the mill men at the pump-house then. "I'm going in to try another talk with Brother Downs, boys. Keep a sharp watch out until I join you again."

The old detective found the rascally mill superintendent as sullen as ever.

At first he refused even to answer when spoken to, but Old King Brady soon changed that.

"Now, my friend," he said, drawing a stool up alongside the imprisoned man, "let's you and I talk politics. You are caught in your own trap, and naturally you would like to get out of it, but you will never do it while you hold yourself so. I don't know you, and don't care a cent what becomes of you. What I want is to save those bullion wagons to the company. Put me in the way of doing it, and I will put you in the way of making your escape."

The light of hope flashed in the eyes of the sullen superintendent.

"I have heard of your way of doing business before," he said. "I have been told you never break such a promise. If I agree to help you will you keep your promise with me?"

"I swear it."

"What will you do?"

"I can't tell you just now, but I swear I will help you to escape—that you shall escape—that you shall never have to face a trial for what you have done to-night."

Downs hesitated a few moments.

Evidently he was thinking hard.

"I agree," he said at last.

"Well, where has the bullion been taken?"

"To Death Valley."

"Why there?"

"To be held until Captain Thunderbolt could arrange to dispose of it."

"Then you were to come in for your share?"

"Yes."

"And the bullion here. What was to be done with that?"

"They didn't get it, did they?"

"Decidedly not."

"Then never mind about it. What difference can it make what our plans were?"

"None at all. I was wrong to put that question. Let us get back to business. Where is this Death Valley?"

"I don't know, for I was never there, but I can find out for you?"

"How?"

"There is a girl I know who is engaged to marry Captain Thunderbolt; secretly she hates him and loves me. She has been in Death Valley. She will give the secret away."

"Where is this girl?"

"Her father is a prospector. At present he is in the mountain looking up claims. The girl lives about twenty-five miles from here."

"You are willing to guide us there? To use her?"

"Yes, if you will protect me from Captain Thunderbolt."

"Oh, you intend to go, too, up into Death Valley?"

"If the girl goes, I go."

"As you will. Of course, you can only go as my prisoner. If any of your men turn on you I can't help that."

"I shall have to take chances. Let me get away in the end with the girl, Mr. Brady, and that is all I ask."

"And for that you have my promise. I will now leave you and proceed to arrange the matter."

"Cut my arms free?"

"That I can't do on account of the men, but when we start you shall be freed."

Old King Brady then left Downs, and hurrying to Buck Bellows, explained what he had done, but without mentioning the promise he had given to the superintendent.

"Good!" said Buck. "Now take my advice and don't call up Rawlins. It can do no good. Let's you and me work this problem out together. I can supply men and horses. If you can hold Downs to his word what more do we want? I believe we can put Captain Thunderbolt out of business, surest thing."

"I agree," said Old King Brady. "I'd about made up my mind to cut out the telephoning anyway, for as you say it can do no good."

"Now we'll get breakfast ready," replied Buck, "so as to have everything in shape when the boys come."

The "boys" came at five o'clock, and of course were duly surprised to learn how matters stood at Burton Mills.

With them was the young bookkeeper, and his was the only voice raised in Downs' favor.

Buck's appeals and Old King Brady's explanations did quick work, and by six o'clock they were on the move.

Some fifteen men were left at the mill, and the detective, with thirty-two mill men and his own little band of three rode off up the Tensleep trail.

They were out for Captain Thunderbolt. They were bound for the mysterious Death Valley, of which all had heard, but the location of which nobody seemed to know.

It was a difficult and dangerous undertaking, but just the same, in spite of many obstacles, Old King Brady had carried his point, and had raised his men at Burton Mills.

CHAPTER X.

HARRY LANDS IN DEATH VALLEY.

We must now return to Young King Brady and learn what had happened between the two raids.

In capturing Lawyer Grayball Harry had put himself in a better position than he had previously occupied, but that was about all that could be said.

"All right, young man! You take your chances with Captain Thunderbolt and see where you'll land," snarled the lawyer after Harry's emphatic refusal to be bribed by his fine promises. "You don't understand this game as well as you think you do. Confound the luck! The biggest bit of fool business I ever did was to come to the Bradys for help to do what I might have known I should have to do myself."

"The Bradys don't help such as you," replied Harry, "but we need say no more—I hear the outlaws coming. They can finish the job which I have begun."

A moment later Captain Thunderbolt and Dan McNutt came dashing up, the gang pressing close behind.

"So you've got him!" cried the outlaw chief. "That's fine! I made sure you would both make off together."

"Then you see how mistaken you were," replied Young King Brady, coolly. "Now that you've got the chance I would suggest that you search this man and then you will be able to judge whether I have told the truth or not."

"It shall be done," was the reply. "Dan, fall back and keep the boys back. I've got a little private business to settle with this fellow. By the way, you may tell the boys that I don't give up the mill yet. I propose to have another hack at it just as quick as I am through here. Let them hold themselves ready for a start."

McNutt fell back and Captain Thunderbolt slipped from the saddle.

"Now, then, what about all these lies you have been giv-

ing me?" demanded the outlaw. "You came to me claiming to be Downs' brother. You promised to deliver the will into my hands. A pretty way your promise has been fulfilled."

"You got the wagons," growled Grayball. "You'd have got the will, too, if it hadn't been for these meddling detectives. No one can ever make me believe that Old King Brady is not at the bottom of all this."

"Who ever heard of Old King Brady being out here?"

"There stands his partner."

"Prove it!" cried Harry, bluffing. "I stand ready to be searched. "My name is Tom Baxter as sure as yours is Grayball."

"My name is Downs, so that tells nothing."

"Enough. I'm going to search you now, my friend," said Captain Thunderbolt. "Keep your hands up. If he as much as winks shoot him—do you hear?"

"I hear, cap, and I'll obey," Harry replied.

Letters and papers and even his own business cards were found upon the lawyer.

Captain Thunderbolt produced a dark lantern and hastily examined the papers without uttering a word.

Grayball seemed ready to sink into the earth with fear.

"I suppose it is all up with me now?" he gasped. "I—er—I would like to suggest a compromise. I can put a large sum in cash into your hands within forty-eight hours, which you could never get in any other way."

"No compromise is possible," replied Captain Thunderbolt, coolly. "So this young man has spoken the truth. I am the only son of Elisha Sniffen. My father, it seems, is dead, and has willed me all his wealth, in spite of the fact that I robbed him and have held no communication with him for years. You, Grayball, or whatever your real name is, are named sole executor; in case I am not found the will of which you kindly brought along a copy, directs you to look up one Charles Carter, son of my sister Sarah, who eloped with my father's valet years ago. Strangely enough, fate threw this boy into my hands. You must have known who he was and where he was. You must have fired that shot and tried to kill him. I should kill you right now if I didn't want to use you, for I haven't the least doubt that if the job you put upon Burton Mills to-night had gone through as arranged by some means or other I should be a dead man now—as dead as you are bound to be just as soon as I have finished using you for all you are worth."

Of course, Young King Brady listened to this speech with the closest attention.

Much of what was said he had known before, for Old King Brady, learning that Grayball was the executor of the dead millionaire had gone to the trouble of looking' up Sniffen's will in the surrogate's office.

"And what have you to say for yourself?" continued Captain Thunderbolt, when Grayball made no reply.

"Nothing. The game is in your hands. Again I warn you to beware how you kill me. It will pay you best to let me live, as I can prove when the right time comes."

"And you?" said Captain Thunderbolt, turning on Harry. "Do you want to be searched, too?"

"Search me!" said Harry, boldly.

"No; I'll not go to that trouble. The fact that you are so willing makes it unnecessary. Baxter, you have done me a great service. I am now a multi-millionaire, it seems. Well, we'll talk of it later. Since you know New York, perhaps it may be your fate to go there with me. In the meantime will you act as guard over this man?"

"Certainly."

"I want you to take him to my main hold-out in Death Valley. Four of my men shall go with you. I go back to Burton Mills to finish my work there."

And this ended Young King Brady's trial. By shrewdness and bluff Harry had won out, but the end was not yet.

Ten minutes later Harry found himself under way to the mysterious Death Valley, guided by Dan McNutt and three others.

Alongside of Young King Brady rode Lawyer Grayball, bound hand and foot.

Before they started Captain Thunderbolt drew Dan McNutt aside, and a conversation of considerable length passed between them.

What its purpose was Harry was to learn later on.

Their way led them down the foothill on to the Tensleep trail, but from this they turned off before they had gone a mile, and struck over a rough, broken country, heading directly for the Big Horn Range, which loomed up before them some twenty miles away.

It was when they were fairly started on this stage of their journey, and daylight had just come that Grayball for the first time spoke.

"Young King Brady, I want to have a word with you," he said, finding Harry's horse a little closer to his own than usual. "It will pay you to listen to me."

"I won't listen to a word you say while you call me by that name," replied Harry, coolly.

"Baxter, then."

"Well, and then?"

"Don't you forget what I told you. That hundred thousand dollars shall be doubled if you will help me out of this scrape."

"I'll think of it," replied Harry, abruptly, and just then the conversation was cut short by Dan McNutt riding up.

The run continued for an hour, the horses being kept at top speed wherever the nature of the trail would permit.

At last they reached the mountains, and entered a dark, gloomy canyon.

They had not gone twenty yards along this canyon before they pulled up at a small hut which stood in a sort of niche in the rocky wall, surrounded by a little plot of ground through which ran a stream, the water trickling down from the rocks above.

The place wore a certain air of neatness unusual to such huts in the Far West.

There was an attempt at a garden, and altogether the spot seemed to bear evidence of a woman's hand.

As the outlaws drew rein a young girl appeared at the door and looked out.

"Oh, that you, Dan?" she cried. "What's in the wind now?"

"We are going back, Sophie," was the answer.

"So I see," said the girl. "Who is the prisoner?"

"Blamed if I know," growled Dan. "Some feller who has run crossways with cap."

As he spoke Dan dismounted and each of the other four men did the same.

A spare horse had been brought along, and Harry had wondered what it was for.

He found out now.

While Dan McNutt stood talking to the girl familiarly, he suddenly threw his arm around her neck.

At first Young King Brady thought it was only a case of flirtation, even when the girl screamed and tried to slap Dan's face.

Then suddenly the others lent a hand, and the girl was lifted bodily upon the spare horse.

"Let me go! Let me go!" screamed the girl. "Where are you going to take me?"

"To Death Valley by cap's orders," said Dan, coolly. "No use to kick, Sophie. You've played fast and loose long enough. This is your unlucky day. Your time has come."

She was securely tied to the saddle, and the bridle placed in her hand.

"You go now, Sophie," said Dan McNutt. "Cap says to-day is to be his wedding day. I reckon he knows."

"I'll never marry him!" screamed Sophie. "I'll put a knife in his black heart first. So much for helping that fellow. Oh, I'll get square with you all."

But after this threat she quieted down.

For three or four miles further their way lay up the canyon, the trail constantly ascending.

At last they made a halt before a ledge of rocks which towered straight above their heads to a height of many hundred feet.

Dan McNutt put his fingers in his mouth and whistled shrilly three times.

After a brief delay the whistle was answered from overhead, and a man armed with a rifle suddenly appeared upon a narrow ledge some twenty feet up.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he exclaimed. "Where's cap?"

"He'll soon follow," replied Dan. "Open the door."

As the man withdrew Harry watched curiously, to see what was going to happen next.

Suddenly a clanking sound was heard, and the next Young King Brady knew a section of the canyon wall swung back.

Into a box made of heavy timber, pieces of rock had been set, the whole forming a door which swung on hinges.

Closed, it exactly resembled the rest of the wall, but open it revealed a narrow passage leading under the rocks.

(Continued on page 26.)



OUT TO-DAY!

OUT TO-DAY! A black and white illustration of a hand with the index finger pointing to the left.

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OUT TO-DAY!

OUT TO-DAY! A black and white illustration of a hand with the index finger pointing to the left.

The procession got on the move now, and ten feet further on they came out into a cross canyon, very narrow, and with walls enormously high.

This was followed for a distance of not more than a quarter of a mile, when they suddenly emerged into a fertile valley about a quarter of a mile wide, through which ran a shallow creek.

High peaks towered on either side, and on the right at the head of the valley but a short distance away.

In the opposite direction the valley appeared to slope sharply down to a lower level, and in the distance Young King Brady could see a white mist which cut off the view.

Directly in front of them was a collection of a dozen or so log huts.

Dogs barked, and came bounding toward them, followed by several men.

"Here we are, Tom Baxter. This is Death Valley!" cried Dan McNutt. "We have reached the end of our journey at last."

CHAPTER XI.

WHILE OLD KING BRADY WORKS INTO DEATH VALLEY HARRY GETS INTO A SERIOUS HOLE.

Within an hour after Young King Brady landed in Death Valley Captain Thunderbolt and the rest of his band came filing in.

Some four hours later, or, to be literal, at about half-past ten o'clock, Old King Brady's party arrived at the hut where Dan McNutt had captured the girl.

"Here is the place," said Downs, who had been riding alongside the old detective all the way from Burton Mills, for having freed the superintendent from his bonds Old King Brady was resolved not to trust him out of his sight. "This is old man Mink's hut, and Sophie should be here."

But Sophie was not there, as the reader is aware; Dan McNutt had given her a call some hours before.

The only person in or about the hut was a half-witted half-breed Indian who sat on a bench outside the door.

"Let me do the talking," said Downs. "There's something wrong, or Sophie would be here."

"Luke, where's old man Mink?" Downs called out.

"He's up in the mountains prospecting," was the brief reply.

"Where's Miss Sophie?"

"I d'n know. She's gone since morning, boss."

"Didn't she tell you where she was going?"

"No. I went to shoot rabbits. When I come back she was gone. I glad you come. Mebbe me get supper now."

All this was said in a thick drawly voice, the man's little eyes winking incessantly as he spoke.

"He's only half-witted," explained Downs in an undertone. "It's just as I feared, Mr. Brady, just as I told you. Out of revenge for his defeat at the mill, Captain Thunderbolt has carried the girl into Death Valley. Now I am on your side. I'm ready to shoot that scoundrel on sight."

"But what is to be done?"

"We must work Luke. Have you any gold about you?"

"Yes, I have a couple of twenty dollar pieces."

"One will do. Luke is crazy about gold. He knows all about Death Valley, and to be candid about it, I know something about it myself, although I never was there, and strange as it may seem to you, never saw this man Captain Thunderbolt except once when at the head of his men he attacked the mill. You see, Mr. Brady, I am ready to talk at last."

"Enough," said the old detective. "I shall question you no further. What next?"

"Luke is next. Here, Luke! Come in here. This gentleman is going to give you gold."

The half-breed came slouching into the hut winking vigorously.

Old King Brady held up his twenty dollar gold piece.

"This is yours, Luke," he said, "if you will tell Mr. Downs what he wants to know."

"Oh, I'll tell," said Luke, making a clutch at the gold piece, which Old King Brady pulled back. "I tell anyway to help Miss Sophie; see, boss, Captain Thunderbolt he must come here while I was gone."

"Of course," said Downs. "He has carried Sophie into Death Valley, Luke."

"I think so, boss. I followed the trail there. Whole lot of men. First last night came big wagons. Never known wagons to go into Death Valley before. Then there's another trail; whole lot of men, though; there's another. I followed all three up to the door."

"Right," said Downs. "Now, Luke, you know the way to the door, but you don't know how to get through."

"No. You get killed you try that. There's always man watching there."

"There's another way of getting into Death Valley, Luke."

"Then you strike the White Death, boss. That kill you and kill you horses, 'less you know what time to go."

"You have been through the White Death?"

Luke gave a chuckling laugh.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Me not afraid. When de springs bubble and spit then keep away so long. Then you have little time when all safe. You must be quick or White Death ketch you—then sure you die."

"How long a time do you have to wait?"

"I can't tell you. I know when I see the spring."

"Is it far?"

"No."

"You can guide us there?"

"And get killed by Captain Thunderbolt—no."

"Yes, Luke. Think of Sophie. You know how she hates that man. Think how unhappy she will be if he makes her marry him."

"She hate him terrible. It's wicked. Poor Sophie! You think your men can lick Captain Thunderbolt's men and get her away?"

"We can try."

"Gimme the gold. I take you into Death Valley!" cried Luke with sudden energy and he held out his hand.

Old King Brady dropped the twenty dollar piece into it, saying as he did so:

"You get another, Luke, if you stick by us and help us through with all we want to do."

"I stick by Miss Sophie," said Luke. "I help you for her sake, boss, not or nothing else."

Thus saying Luke went outside and seated himself on the bench again fixing his winking eyes upon the ground.

Old King Brady now tried to draw Downs out further, but it was little use.

He now called Mose, Buck Bellows and some of the others together, and explained how matters stood.

Most of the men were willing to risk the White Death, the existence of which in the valley but few of them had heard.

The old detective's arrangements were quickly made.

Those who did not wish to go—there were only five all told—he ordered to remain at the entrance to the canyon.

"If by any chance Captain Thunderbolt makes his escape through the secret door, and comes your way, there is two thousand dollars coming to the man who will put a bullet into him," he said. "Let that be remembered. If you are not disturbed, wait until we return, and if time passes and we don't return, get over to Tensleep and tell what has happened here. Then let some one wire Governor Perkins that we went into Death Valley and have probably lost our lives."

Old King Brady's arrangements were now completed, and with Luke in the lead all filed down the canyon skirting the base of the mountains for a mile or so.

Luke, who was mounted upon a horse belonging to the old prospector Mink, now led the way up to the side of the mountain by a winding trail until they came to a level stretch where there was a thick growth of trees.

Pushing on through this strip of forest, they passed through a narrow opening in the rocky wall at its end which was so small and so winding that no one would have guessed that it led anywhere in particular.

Luke, however, knew better and in a few moments had led Old King Brady and his party out into a narrow valley which appeared to extend well back among the mountains.

At some distance ahead a thick white mist could be seen hovering low down upon the ground.

"Look! The White Death!" cried Luke. "Now we must wait. We are in Death Valley, but we must wait for the mist to rise."

* * * * *

And thus it came about that while Young King Brady found himself at one end of Death Valley, Old King Brady with his little force of miners and mill men were in the other.

The distance between them was not over three miles and beyond Captain Thunderbolt's camp the valley extended

perhaps half a mile further, where it was cut off by a towering wall of rock, as has already been explained.

Young King Brady's reception at the outlaws' camp was pleasant enough.

Not by a word or look were his suspicions aroused that he might be in any danger.

Indeed it is doubtful if any of the gang thought so at the time, for Captain Thunderbolt was one of those unfathomable persons who make confidants of no one—not even their best friends.

Among those who came to meet them was Dick Wright, and one of the first things Harry observed as he approached the huts were the two big **bullion** wagons standing near the stream.

Of course Dan McNutt had to answer all sorts of questions about the unsuccessful attack on Burton Mills.

After he had satisfied his curiosity and Young King Brady got a chance to speak to him alone, he asked about Charley Carter.

"He's all right," said Dick. "He's coming along fine. His wound don't amount to much. I think he could straddle a broncho now if he was put to it, but I tell him to lie quiet till Cap comes. What about this fellow Downs? Dan says you are the only one who knows why Cap ordered him to be held a prisoner."

"Yes, and my orders were not to tell," replied Harry firmly.

"Oh, well, if them were the orders you have got to stand by them," said Dick. "It's blame strange, though. You see that fellow came to us at the lower camp where you were, with a letter of introduction from Downs of the Burton Mills. The letter stated that he was Downs' brother and that he had a proposition to make. Wa'al, that there proposition was to turn the mills and the bullion into our hands. It's the strangest thing. I never believed in it. I can't understand what it all meant unless it actually did mean business, but it seems it didn't after all."

"I can't explain to you," said Harry. "If I told you all I know I don't believe it would help you much."

"Yes, and don't you tell, if you want to live," said Dick emphatically. "You don't know Cap as I know him. He's all right if you rub him the right way, but if you don't, why he's—but never mind! Come with me and you shall see the kid, and it's mighty glad he'll be to see you, too."

"How differently everything has gone from what we expected!" thought Young King Brady, as he followed Dick Wright. "Instead of the long chase after this outlaw that we looked for here, we have been brought right up against him at the very start. I wonder how it is all going to end? It may be long enough before I see the last of this place."

Charley Carter was found lying on a cheap cot bed, over which blankets had been laid.

He was overjoyed to see Harry and most anxious to know all that had occurred.

It was while they were talking at a later visit some time afterward that loud shouts and the clatter of horses outside told them that Captain Thunderbolt had come.

"Now, Charley, you want to brace up," said Harry hurriedly. "I'm going to give you a pointer. This man is—"

But Harry got no further, for at the same instant the door of the hut was darkened and Captain Thunderbolt himself came striding in.

"Well, how is the boy, Baxter?" he exclaimed.

"Doing fine!" replied Harry. "Did you succeed in your second attack on Burton Mills?"

"Succeed nothing. They turned the hose on us," growled the bandit, "but there's one thing I did succeed in, young man."

"And what's that?" inquired Harry innocently enough, for he never dreamed what was coming.

"In proving you a most beautiful liar," replied Captain Thunderbolt. "Now, I haven't a doubt that you are Young King Brady, for I saw Old King Brady standing at the window upstairs over the office of Burton Mills with my own eyes."

Harry caught his breath.

"Do you know Old King Brady when you see him?" he asked.

"Who don't know Old King Brady's picture? Speak up now! Tell the truth if you expect to live. Are you Young King Brady or not?"

It was a perilous moment.

Harry hesitated; for the life of him he could not decide what to say.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

"Luke says that now is the time, Mr. Brady. The mist is lifting, as you see."

Old King Brady, who had stretched himself upon the grass to snatch a few moments' needed sleep, sprang to his feet and announced himself ready for business again.

Looking toward the "white death" he could see that it had risen to a height of some twenty feet above the ground.

"How long does it hold that way?" he asked Mose Medford, who had aroused him.

"Luke says not more than ten minutes. Then them hot springs get bubbling again, and a new lot rises, what joins with what's there, and it all drops down heavy on the ground."

"Order a move at once," said Old King Brady. "We must make the most of our chance."

So on they dashed with all possible speed, and soon were passing under the fatal mist.

Here there were many pools of water from which arose a sulphurous smell, the edges of the pools being deeply encrusted with a whitish substance which resembled the alkali of the Nevada plains.

Just as they passed the last of these pools it began to boil furiously, and a few seconds later there was the mist

behind them, a thick wall of white, completely cutting off the view of the lower part of the valley.

"Halt here!" cried Old King Brady. "We have passed the danger point, now let us see where we are at before making the next move."

On ahead the valley took a sharp turn, cutting off the view in that direction as well.

Old King Brady dropped from the saddle and ordered Mose and Buck Bellows to dismount also.

"We'll sneak ahead to that turn," he declared. "I want to get the lay of the land."

"Look out," said the half-breed. "Captain Thunderbolt's camp right ahead now."

"Come on, boys," said the detective. "We shall soon see!"

Old King Brady strode on in advance and reached the bend in the rocky wall which bounded the valley on their right before the others came up.

Removing his hat he peered around the corner of the rocks.

At the same instant the sharp report of a rifle rang out.

With a startled exclamation Old King Brady pulled away.

"Quick!" he cried. "It is now or never! They have just shot one man and my partner's turn comes next! Merciful heaven! I'm afraid I am too late to save him as it is."

Back to the horses they flew, and the order to advance was given.

Old King Brady was preparing to attack Captain Thunderbolt on his own ground. Meanwhile their retreat was cut off by the White Death.

* * * * *

Young King Brady's affairs had come to a crisis sooner than he looked for.

"There is but one thing for me to do, and that is to own up," he thought, so he folded his arms and quietly said:

"Well, I admit my identity. I am Young King Brady, but just the same I have tried to be true to you and to this boy."

"Indeed!" said the outlaw chief. "You do well to admit it. As a matter of fact, I never doubted that you were the detective. What brought you to Wyoming? How did you ever have the courage to come into my camp?"

"It was for the sake of the boy. I happened to know about Elisha Sniffins' will. I knew that the boy was your nephew, and I was determined to let you know, too."

"What!" cried Charley, sitting up on the cot. "Are you my uncle, then?"

"I am," replied Captain Thunderbolt. "You are my sister's son, and from me you have nothing to fear."

"Don't hurt him! He saved my life!" cried Charley.

"Enough! Lie down and keep quiet!" broke in the outlaw. "Brady, follow me."

There was nothing for it but to obey, and Harry walked out of the hut with a sinking heart.

And the situation did not look any more cheerful when

He saw Lawyer Grayball with his hands tied behind him standing against a tree which grew near, while the outlaws with grim faces stood around.

"Boys," said Captain Thunderbolt, "I want to tell you that a change has come over our affairs. It is necessary to get the bullion wagons out of here soon. We will drive them to the railroad, where by hook or crook we must make a deal with the crew of some freight train to ship the bullion to Cheyenne according to our original plan. I have determined to abandon Death Valley for good and all. Hitch up and we will make a quick start. Let the wounded boy be made comfortable in one of the wagons. Load on such provisions as we need, and we will push out of here without delay. Now, Brady, make yourself easy. I have decided to let up on you, seeing that you have done me no harm."

Immensely relieved, Harry hung around and watched the preparations for the departure.

Nobody spoke to him. Captain Thunderbolt disappeared inside of another hut, and it was two hours before he came out again, accompanied by the girl Sophie.

By this time the horses were hitched to the bullion wagons, and all was ready for the start, the men having grown very impatient with the long wait.

Harry thought Captain Thunderbolt took this sharp refusal very quietly, for the outlaw chief turned away and joined his men.

The girl was pacing up and down before the hut, when suddenly she was pounced upon by Dick Wright and Barney McNutt, who had sneaked up behind her.

In spite of her screams and appeals to Captain Thunderbolt, who stood calmly watching the proceeding, she was dragged toward him, kicking and struggling as she came.

"Tie her up! Throw her into the wagon!" he said, sternly. "I'll tame her or I'll kill her, one of the two."

Harry's blood fairly boiled at this outrage.

"The kid next!" came the order. "Be gentle with him."

Charley was then brought out and put into the other wagon.

Grayball all this time had kept his place against the tree to which Young King Brady had already discovered he was tied.

Captain Thunderbolt now walked up to Harry and extended his hand.

"Shake, Brady," he said. "Do you know I admire you. I never saw or knew a fellow with such nerve."

Harry laughed and took the outlaw's hand.

A grip of iron closed upon him, and he was jerked forward, kicked in the stomach, and went sprawling on the ground.

"You young fiend! You blamed spy!" roared Captain Thunderbolt. "You will come out here to hunt me down, will you? You don't know the man you have run up against! Tie him up, boys! We'll shoot him with the other one before we make the start!"

And so it came about that Young King Brady soon found

himself with his hands tied behind him, standing beside Mr. J. Steel Grayball by the tree.

The outlaws had placed themselves around in a semicircle. Captain Thunderbolt, rifle in hand, stood before the band.

"Now, then! This is my job!" he cried. "Spies I never tolerate. Here goes one!"

He threw up his rifle and fired at the lawyer, who was howling for mercy.

The aim was sure, and the bullet did its fatal work. Grayball's head fell forward, and his feet slipped from under him, but he still hung to the tree.

"This is the end," thought Harry, who was not tied to the tree.

"And here goes the other," said Captain Thunderbolt, after a brief delay, during which time his eyes were firmly fixed upon Harry.

Even as the rifle cracked Young King Brady fell forward on his face.

"Two out!" sneered Captain Thunderbolt, turning away.

The words were scarcely spoken when Dick Wright yelled:

"Look! Look! An attack! Great guns! The valley is full of men!"

"What!" roared Captain Thunderbolt. "It is! Who the mischief can they be? Who has had the daring to brave the White Death, which is something we never dared to tackle yet. Mount, all! Give them a hot reception. Don't wait for them to come—charge!"

All hands threw themselves into the saddle.

On they dashed down the valley, but Old King Brady and his mill men never faltered.

"They have killed my young partner, boys!" cried Old King Brady, calmly. "Spare none! Fire when I give the word!"

It came within a few seconds.

The attack and the outlaws' return fire came almost simultaneously.

Yells, shots, wild cries, and fierce imprecations burst upon the air.

It was all over in a moment.

Skilled at the rifle as the outlaws surely were, the mill men proved themselves still more so.

But two of their number were unhorsed, and slightly wounded when the gang turned and fled up the valley, leaving nine dead or wounded upon the ground.

Captain Thunderbolt was among the first to fall.

Whose shot laid him dead was never determined, but dead he was when they came up with him.

"Don't follow them up, boys," cried Old King Brady. "As long as they keep their distance that is all we care for."

The outlaws had retreated far beyond the huts, and now they disappeared among the rocks.

"They are making for the secret door," declared Downs. "They intend to escape that way."

"Let them go," said Old King Brady. "We have won out. Now, look up your girl."

Downs made a dash for the wagon, and when Old King Brady next saw him he had the girl on the saddle in front of him.

Meanwhile Old King Brady's own mind had experienced unspeakable relief.

He had seen Harry stretched on the ground when the attack was made, but now as he looked again there he was alive and kicking, and running toward him at top speed.

"My dear boy!" gasped Old King Brady. "I thought you were gone that time! I——"

"Don't say a word, Governor!" cried Harry. "I did your old turn. That fiend tried to shoot me, but the instant his hand went on the trigger I threw myself flat on my face. Well, it saved me! Have you got him?"

"Death has got him, Harry. Captain Thunderbolt will plague Wyoming no more."

"And once more we win out!" cried Young King Brady. "It was a close call for me, and there lies another of Death Valley's victims. There will have to be a new executor appointed to the Sniffin estate."

* * * * *

"When we get to the hut I'll order a halt. You don't want to be found when we start again."

These words Old King Brady whispered in the ear of Superintendent Downs.

The man nodded but made no answer.

The start had been made now, and the big wagons were being drawn toward the secret entrance to Death Valley.

Harry had already interviewed Charley Carter, and explained what had occurred, but by Old King Brady's advice he had not mentioned the matter of the Sniffin estate.

They entered the little canyon and reached the tunnel.

The secret door stood open at the end and the way was clear.

With Harry at his side the old detective rode ahead, and passed into the open canyon beyond.

There was no one to be seen, but as they halted they saw a man scrambling over the rocks above them who instantly disappeared.

"Look out there!" shouted Old King Brady. "There's mischief a-foot. Hurry the wagons through and get out yourselves just as fast as you can."

Old Mose, who was driving the first wagon, lashed his horses into a run, and the others followed with all speed.

At first it looked as if the old detective had been unnecessarily alarmed, but before they had advanced ten yards down the canyon the air was rent by a fearful explosion, which startled all the horses so that they were well on their way to the Mink hut before their speed could be checked.

Just what happened was never known, but Old King Brady, as well as others, saw the rocks come crashing down, burying the secret door.

"It is the outlaws' last throw," declared the old detective. "No doubt they left that fellow behind them to light the

fuse which connected with that dynamite, for the explosion could have been caused by nothing else."

Ordering the men forward, the Bradys rode back to have a look.

They saw nothing of the man on the rocks, and they found the secret door completely blocked.

"And that's the last of Death Valley," declared Old King Brady. "Grayball's body will have to stop where it is, although I intended to send and have it brought to Tensleep, but it is not worth risking the White Death."

The halt at the Mink hut was duly made, and here Luke got his other twenty.

When they started again Downs and Sophie had vanished.

The bullion was driven back to Burton Mills, and then the Bradys, with Charley Carter, made tracks for New York via Rawlins and Cheyenne.

At Rawlins the detectives reported to the mill people, who later on rewarded them handsomely.

At Cheyenne they interviewed the governor, and the promised reward for Captain Thunderbolt, alive or proofs of his death, was paid over, for Old King Brady had taken care to bring with him the affidavits of several of the mill men that the outlaw chief was actually dead.

And now Charley Carter was informed of his great good fortune.

The Sniffin estate amounted to upwards of several millions of dollars, and this vast sum the poor ranch boy ultimately came into possession of.

Charley handled himself in a very proper fashion, and took to his wealth as though he had been used to it all his life.

The court appointed a guardian for him, and by Charley's request Old King Brady was the man.

The boy was put to a good school and is now going through college.

He has repeatedly asserted that as soon as he comes into his fortune he intends to reward the Bradys well, and there is little doubt that he will keep his word.

Up to last accounts Death Valley has never been visited since that memorable day which saw the wind-up of the stirring matter of the Bradys and Captain Thunderbolt.

THE END.

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